

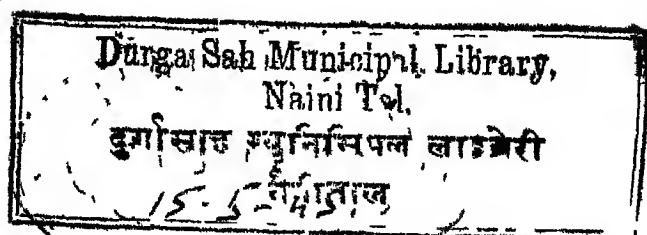
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First as a practising barrister, then as Metropolitan Magistrate for West London since 1934; and as a Member of Parliament for twelve years, Sir Gervais Rentoul has passed most of his life in two of the most fascinating fields of human activity: law and politics. His autobiography, *This is My Case*, is the highly entertaining story of a man who, as a politician working often outside the limelight of publicity, saw a very great deal of what went on behind the scenes in the exciting, eventful years of the twenties and early thirties; and who, as a lawyer and magistrate, has seen much of the comedy and tragedy of everyday life which passes unnoticed by the ordinary law-abiding public.



THIS IS MY CASE

By the same Author:

SOMETIMES I THINK—Random Reflections and Recollections



THE AUTHOR
(present day)

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THIS IS MY CASE

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

SIR GERVAIS RENTOUL, K.C., M.A.

Metropolitan Magistrate for West London, sometime
Recorder of Sandwich, and M.P. for the
Lowestoft Division of Suffolk

ILLUSTRATED

Second Impression

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TO
MY WIFE

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FOREWORD

LET me confess at once that I have written this book primarily as a form of mental relaxation. It has been a pleasant distraction to turn one's mind away now and then from the never-ending horrors and anxieties of war, and recall events and incidents of the past which have helped to make up my life—most of them, I am glad to say, belonging to those almost forgotten days of peace and plenty, the like of which we can scarcely hope to see again in our time.

How far this record will interest anyone except my own family and friends I must leave others to judge. There may, however, be some who, like myself, find more entertainment in the real life-story of even the most mediocre and unimportant individual than in any work of fiction.

That much of what I have written is brazenly egotistical goes without saying; indeed, that is inevitable in any autobiography. As it is my own story I am telling I cannot avoid talking a good deal about myself. And after all, in the words of the Psalmist: "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."

Most of my life has, of course, been lived against a background of world shattering events such as no previous generation has experienced, but my part in them has been mainly that of an onlooker rather than an actual participant. I have not been entrusted with great national responsibilities such as have devolved upon many other men with whom I have been privileged to claim some degree of personal acquaintance and friendship. Still, it is something to be in the theatre even if one cannot take part in the play. I have at all events been close enough to the stage and to some of the actual performers to see more than those sitting at the back, and more perhaps at times than I was intended to see. I have, however, endeavoured to betray no confidence, and have done no more than give my own impressions of the drama and of some of the leading players. Occasionally I have wandered from the narrow path of my own personal story, and indulged myself to the extent of setting down thoughts and opinions that, like the "flowers that bloom in the spring", have nothing to do with the case. For these I claim no authority whatever except that they are based on a fairly long and varied experience.

Unfortunately, I have never managed to keep a diary for more than a few months at a time. It is one of my regrets that I did not have the patience and perseverance to do so, especially during the twelve years I was a Member of the House of Commons. To have kept such a record whilst the events were fresh in my mind would have been of the greatest interest to myself even if to no one else; and I have regretted it more than ever when writing this book, because I have had to rely almost entirely upon my memory and a few volumes of newspaper cuttings. Consequently, for any shortcomings and possibly a few minor errors of detail and chronology, I apologize in advance.

Someone has said—I think it was John Ruskin—that every sensible man should feel under an obligation to leave his descendants some account of his experience of life. This is what I have tried to do. After all, the chief thing in writing an autobiography is that it happens to be the one subject about which the author is the greatest living authority. He alone knows all the facts; but whilst this may provide an excuse for some amount of egotism there are certain pitfalls.

To begin with, there is the danger that, although we know ourselves better than anyone else, we are ignorant of the figure we cut in the world and how we strike other people. It may be, for instance, that we possess some physical peculiarity, some mannerism or habit, some "kink" of which we are unaware, and yet which is the one thing that will be remembered by our friends and acquaintances long after those more solid and admirable qualities upon which we like to pride ourselves are entirely forgotten. In other words, it is often some petty and unimportant characteristic or idiosyncrasy which causes us to be-liked or disliked by those with whom we rub shoulders in our journey through life.

I knew one man of great eminence at the Bar, whose income was reputed to be about £40,000 a year, who made a practice of going each day to the Temple in a crowded bus, carrying his own bag and lunching off sandwiches which he brought with him in a paper parcel. He doubtless had no idea of the contemptuous criticisms expressed regarding his parsimony, even among those who were loudest in their admiration of his intellectual and forensic ability.

It may well happen, therefore, that in writing an autobiography in which we naturally seek to show ourselves in not too unfavourable a light, we merely succeed in demonstrating more clearly our own shortcomings and defects.

Then again, there is the danger that things which seem to the writer to be of the utmost interest—especially incidents in which he himself has taken part—may strike other people as being too tedious for words. However, as to this, I am encouraged by the view of a well-known critic, who once wrote as follows:

It has become almost a proverbial saying that everybody can write one good book: the story of his own life. The proverb would admit of fewer exceptions than any proverb in the world if only the author could be depended upon to tell the whole truth. Our own feeling is that an autobiography is bound to be interesting even if the author tells a proportion of the truth; if he gives in the barest, the most unskilled fashion the mere facts about his childhood, his relations to his parents, his schooldays, his search for a career and so on, he cannot help being interesting because at every stage he provides material for a comparison with our own experiences. Without wishing to be paradoxical, we might even say that if he has a real gift of dullness he still cannot be dull, because the fact of his dullness is in itself a subject of speculation. Why is he dull; what made him dull? Was he born dull, or did he achieve dullness?

Having therefore given potential readers this consoling line of thought, and having warned them that they may find this book both egotistic and tedious, I disclaim all further responsibility if they persevere in perusing it. Should there be some, however, who less exacting and more indulgent see fit to do so, I trust that possibly they may find some interest in and derive some amusement from its discursive pages.

At all events everyone's case is different.

Here, then, is mine!

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CHAPTER · I

EARLY MEMORIES

"By the time we are conscious of youth we are past it."

THE first thing I can remember is a small red-haired boy with his face pressed against the window-pane. It is pouring with rain, and, feeling very bored, he is eagerly watching for a chubby little girl with a mass of dark curls and deep violet eyes to pass on her way home from school. Twice a week she comes in to tea, and is his only childish companion. Slightly older by a few months than the boy, she is infinitely more precocious and self-possessed. Whenever he commits any social lapse—such as putting his jammy fingers in his mouth—she shakes her head reprovingly and admonishes him, as she herself had often been admonished, to "Be a lady!"

Perhaps having no one else to play with had made him rather a timid little boy; at all events there was the episode of the tricycle horse. Having been presented with one of these thrilling machines on his birthday, he longed to mount the gaily-painted quadruped—pink and yellow spots if I remember aright—and cycle down a nearby slope. Being, however, a little apprehensive of the consequences, he apparently felt that his confidence might be increased if someone else were to essay this dangerous experiment first. Remembering some recent instructions in social etiquette, he turned to his little companion and murmured in dulcet tones: "Ladies first." Whereupon the intrepid "Vi" embarked on the perilous journey without mishap; thus stimulating the faint heart of her youthful cavalier.

Sometimes, of course, there were return visits to Vi's home, where he used to meet her three elderly sisters: all grown-ups and therefore entirely lacking in interest—the eldest of them must have been nearly twenty years of age! Then there was her father, a good-looking man with snow-white hair and a pointed beard, who went up to London every day and did mysterious things in the City; whence he would return, often bringing with him toy pistols, mechanical engines, tin soldiers and other fascinating articles. How he got them I do not know to this day; but as there is no reason to believe they were dishonestly come by, his business must have had something to do with mechanical toys. At all events, it made the attic where these things were stored a treasure-house of interest and delight.

Other memories are connected with social gatherings—"tea meetings" I think they were called—at the church where the boy's father ministered to his flock every Sunday. During the week he practised at the Bar. On these occasions a plentiful supply of buns, rock-cakes and doughnuts, the latter a special weakness of the boy's, were baked at home, carefully packed in large biscuit tins, and then trundled down to the church room in a disused perambulator by the boy and his faithful Vi, who was frequently a veritable Eve in mischief. There was one occasion over which it would be wise perhaps to draw a veil, when—at the top of the long slope—she suggested they should both mount on the pram and coast down to the bottom. The result was disastrous, for halfway down the slope the springs gave way; the vehicle overturned, and

the two passengers, cakes, buns and all were scattered over the roadway. As to the painful sequel in the domestic circle it is best to say nothing!

My father's church was at Woolwich, and we lived in the neighbouring suburb of Plumstead, where I was born. Many of his congregation were employed in Woolwich Arsenal, and a great proportion of them must have been Scotch, for nearly all the names I remember best were "Macs". There were, however, the L.s, who had a fine house at Plumstead and a fascinating garden laid out in terraces on the side of a hill. Mr. L., a shrewd north-countryman, had evidently made his way to a position of some responsibility, and had a good deal to do with the placing of Government contracts. I remember him telling my father once that he had just received a box—apparently of cigars—but when opened it was found to be full of golden sovereigns—there were such things in those days! This, for some reason I could not understand, had made him very angry, and he said he had returned the gift and told the individual concerned "where he got off". It seemed to me a little ungrateful, as it sounded rather a nice present.

Then came the first great milestone in my life, and we moved to London. My father had by that time given up the ministry and been elected a Member of Parliament. As a result we were henceforth to live in a place called Westminster. It was rather exciting, though it meant leaving "Vi." However, the best of friends must part; and strangely enough I cannot ever remember meeting her again, though I suppose I must have seen her once or twice. She ceased, however, to be a figure in my life, and I soon began to have other interests. I stayed for a few days with her parents while our new home was being got ready, and was then brought up to London. There my very first memory is being taken to feed the ducks in St. James's Park, which was only a stone's throw from our new home at 24, Old Queen Street, Westminster, just behind Birdcage Walk. It was a tiny house, of which the ground floor was let off to an architect. We occupied six small rooms overhead. There was no bathroom; indeed comparatively few small houses possessed such luxuries in those days, and the kitchen was inconveniently placed on the third floor. However, I imagine that the rent was as small as the house, and that this constituted the great attraction. I realized later that my parents must often have had a terrible struggle to make both ends meet. My father had burned his boats when, at nearly forty years of age, he was called to the Bar; and when six years later he became a Member of Parliament he had not by any means established himself from a professional point of view. There was, moreover, no payment of Members in those days, which might have eased matters to some extent. His practice was seriously damaged too by reason of his immense success as a platform speaker, and the demands which were consequently made upon him from all over the country. For his services in this connection my father—quixotically as it seems to me—refused to accept one penny piece by way of remuneration.

But apart from this he found it as difficult as many others have done to combine a legal and political career. Unless one's position at the Bar is well established, or one is the fortunate possessor of adequate private means, the double strain is too great. And in addition, solicitors are chary of briefing a barrister M.P. If the case is intricate and important they fear that his parliamentary duties may prevent him from giving to it the time and attention which

would be forthcoming from someone whose interests were not so divided. If, on the other hand, the matter is a small one, many solicitors hesitate to offer it to an M.P. They do not like to ask a barrister who has attained the dignity of membership of the House of Commons to spend a whole day in Whitechapel County Court for "three and one". For these reasons no one who is dependent on the Bar for his bread and butter should contemplate entering the House of Commons until he has reached a secure position and has taken "silk"; and even then he may probably have to choose between the sacrifice of a large part of his practice or more or less occasional attendance at Westminster.

Our sole domestic staff at Old Queen Street—there may have been others, but I have forgotten them—was an elderly woman, Louisa Smith, to whom I was devoted. For several years she was cook, housemaid, nurse and general factotum. She was a friendly, sympathetic soul, with a good fund of common sense and the essence of tact. She received most of my childish confidences. I cannot remember her ever being flustered or put out about anything, or to speak a cross word. Yet she had her own trials and difficulties, of which not the least was "Mr. Smith". He earned his living as a waiter in casual employment; and during the winter season, when a lot of public dinners were taking place, would be out four or five nights a week. On these occasions he always took with him a small black bag, such as doctors often carry, and generally brought it back full of delicacies—purloined or otherwise obtained—which had been left over from the various feasts at which he had been in attendance. Sometimes, too, it seems he took a certain amount of liquid refreshment before going home. At these times he was apt to be a little noisy, and apparently needed some assistance in getting to bed. The next day, however, he was usually extremely doleful and lugubrious. Whenever I expressed some curiosity about this Mrs. Smith would invariably reply: "I am afraid poor Mr. Smith was not feeling too good last night."

As part remuneration for her services Mr. and Mrs. Smith were allowed to occupy three small dark rooms in the basement of our house, and sometimes I was invited down there to tea and to partake of some specially appetizing tit-bit from Mr. Smith's black bag.

In accordance with the usual Victorian custom, my mother had periodical "At Home" days. These took place, I remember, on the second Tuesday in each month, and required a good deal of preparation. Sandwiches had to be cut, home-made cakes and scones provided; and also there was a marvellous confection known as "lawn tennis cake". It had marzipan on top and was full of cherries and other fruit. As there was generally a small piece for me, this made our "At Home" days worth while.

But the main excitement of those occasions was as to the number of chance callers who would turn up. Occasionally no one at all came, and my mother, dressed in her best, would wait expectant the whole afternoon. Gloom, and a certain disillusionment regarding the value of friendship, pervaded the household. All the cakes and other preparations were regarded as having been wasted, and the "At Home" day was voted an entire frost. Usually, however, the bag was six to a dozen; then there was much gossip to relate afterwards, and the whole thing was considered a great success.

When I was nearly nine years old the time came for me to go to school. Until then my education had been almost entirely in the hands of my mother.

Although she did her best, at the cost of considerable self-sacrifice, I am afraid she had little liking and not much aptitude for the task. She was by temperament too impatient to be a good teacher; and if her efforts had not been nobly supplemented by my father in the few leisure moments of a very busy life, I should have learnt little. He had, however, a marvellous natural gift of imparting knowledge and of making it interesting; and throughout the whole of my school and university career any small success I attained was undoubtedly due in very large measure to his patient and never-tiring instruction. I often heard him say that if he had had his choice he would rather have been a schoolmaster than anything else in the world, and that he regarded it as the finest job any man could undertake.

It was then decided that I should go as a day-boy to the City of London School, which was conveniently situated on the Thames Embankment close to Blackfriars Bridge, and where the fees were extremely modest—about £15 15s. a year, if I remember aright. This was due to the fact that the school had been founded and subsidized about a century ago by the Corporation of London, who utilized for the purpose an ancient endowment left by one of their mediæval town clerks, John Carpenter, for the education of “four poor boys”.

When I was there the school numbered between six and seven hundred boys, drawn from almost all ranks and grades of society. It had no traditions of aristocracy or privilege, but it had a teaching staff second to none, as it was able through the generosity of the Corporation to outbid in salaries most of the big and famous schools, and a headmaster, Mr. Arthur Tempest Pollard, who worthily upheld the standards set in the past by two great predecessors whose names are still honoured in scholastic circles—Dr. Mortimer and Dr. Abbott.

Among its distinguished pupils it was able to claim an ex-Prime Minister in Lord Oxford and Asquith; two ex-Chancellors of the Exchequer in Mr. (later Lord) Goschen and Mr. Reginald McKenna; a Dominions Secretary in Mr. Malcolm MacDonald; the late General Bramwell Booth, of the Salvation Army; Lord Chalmers of Northam and Sir Malcolm Delevigne, Permanent Secretaries of the Treasury and Home Office; Dr. L. R. Farnell, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University; as well as Sir Walter Raleigh, the famous Professor of Literature; C. E. Montague, the essayist and dramatic critic; Lord Ritchie of Dundee; Sir William Soulsby, for so many years the Lord Mayor's Secretary; Talbot Baines Reed, whose popularity as a writer of stories for boys almost rivalled that of the great G. A. Henty, although I fear they are neither of them read much today, and a large number of others who are now well known in civic and business circles.

I was at the City of London School for about ten years, and went right through from the lowest form up to the sixth. Wet or fine, I walked there and back from Westminster every day, which doubtless was very good for me. Children attending the State schools nowadays receive free transport at the ratepayers' expense; we had no such advantages, but I cannot say we suffered in health or stamina as a result.

My shortest way to school was along the Embankment, for the construction of which my great-uncle, Edmund Cooper, was largely responsible. I would often return home, however, by a longer and more interesting route which took me through the changeless Temple, past the fountain where Ruth Pinch and John Westlock had their trysting-place; then out into Essex Street and the

Strand; through Holywell Street, a dark, narrow, sinister-looking lane with overhanging houses and almost entirely occupied by secondhand booksellers and those curious little shops full of pornographic literature and contraceptive appliances which always seem to congregate in such localities. Holywell Street has, of course, long since disappeared, to make way for the palatial Bush House and spacious Kingsway, whilst most of the bookshops have migrated to the Charing Cross Road.

At one end of this fascinating old-world lane was the Globe Theatre, where W. S. Penley was "still running" in his phenomenal success, *Charley's Aunt*. A little farther on was the original Gaiety, despotically presided over by the great George Edwardes, whose "Young Ladies", like those of Mr. Cochran at a later date, provided so many charming recruits to the peerage. The names of Rosie Boote, Gertie Millar, Belle Bilton, Connie Gilchrist and Zena Dare are just a few.

The most sensational theatrical engagement in the matrimonial line was that of Miss Fortescue, who was not a "Gaiety Girl" but a most refined and cultured lady, who would have been an ornament to any family. It was my privilege to meet her more than once when we were both taking part in amateur theatricals, and I well remember her charm and wit. She had the misfortune—or perhaps the good fortune as events turned out—to meet a young nobleman who became her ardent admirer and ultimately proposed marriage. The engagement naturally aroused immense public interest, and the young couple were overwhelmed with congratulations. But soon his infatuation waned; and after being openly slighted poor Miss Fortescue was left badly in the lurch. She thereupon brought an action for breach of promise, and this was finally settled out of Court for what were considered at the time the entirely fabulous damages of ten thousand pounds. Since then, however, our ideas have expanded, and the sum does not seem nearly so large today. Miss Fortescue never married, and I am glad to say was still alive and well when last I heard of her.

Continuing my homeward course, I next came to the famous Lyceum, with the magic names of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in large letters over the pillared portico; these two supreme artists then being at the height of their fame.

Close to the Lyceum, on the other side of the road, was the miniature Terry's Theatre, where Edward Terry—no relation of the more famous Terrys—was appearing with so much success in *Sweet Lavender*, one of the earliest, least sophisticated and most charming of Pinero's farces. Almost adjoining was the flamboyant Hotel Cecil, now replaced by the ugly Shell Mex building, the clock of which is said to be larger than Big Ben, although by some curious optical illusion it seems considerably smaller. On the opposite side of the road were the Vaudeville Theatre and Romano's restaurant, which are among the very few buildings which look much the same today as they did then. Exeter Hall, the home of religious lecture societies and Revivalist meetings, occupied the site of the palatial Strand Palace Hotel. A little farther on, towards Charing Cross, was the old Adelphi Theatre, which was intimately associated with the supreme *matinée* idol of those days—William Terriss, the father of Ellaline Terriss and one of the most romantic personalities of the stage. I remember gazing with horror at the stage door of the Adelphi in Maiden Lane, where "Bill" Terriss

had been stabbed to death only the day before by a madman named Prince. I am afraid I almost hoped that a few bloodstains or some traces of this tragic episode might still be visible.

Opposite the Adelphi was the famous Tivoli Music Hall, now a picture palace. I can still call to mind the posters outside bearing the illustrious names of Little Tich, Wilkie Bard, George Robey, Eugene Stratton, Ada Reeve, the incomparable Marie Lloyd, Chirgwin ("the White-eyed Kaffir"), Cinquevalli (the famous juggler), and a host of others. Crossing the road again, one next reached the never-to-be-forgotten Lowther Arcade, packed with toy-shops from end to end, and therefore the Mecca of every child's pilgrimage. And finally there was the Golden Cross Hotel, immortalized by the pen of Charles Dickens and one of the last of the old coaching hostelrys.

After that my course lay down Whitehall, through the Horse Guards, where the two mounted sentries were a source of perpetual interest, across St. James's Park to have a look at my friends the ducks, and then home.

Sometimes I would wander farther afield and explore the West End, from which, alas, so many familiar landmarks have long since disappeared. For instance, on the site of the Piccadilly Hotel there used to stand St. James's Hall, where I often heard on Sunday mornings the two famous evangelists, Mark Guy Pearce and Hugh Price Hughes, hold their audiences spellbound. There was a dramatic appeal in their sermons which impressed me even as a boy.

Farther along Piccadilly, almost opposite the Burlington Arcade, stood the Egyptian Hall of Mystery, which Maskelyne and Cooke (afterwards Maskelyne and Devant) managed to fill twice daily for many years with a programme entirely devoted to conjuring and juggling. Farther on still, facing the Green Park, was the palatial Devonshire House—the London residence of the Duke of Devonshire—with its great courtyard and magnificent iron gates, still preserved as part of the railings of the Green Park. I was once taken by my father to a political reception at Devonshire House, and it was the first time I had ever seen such magnificence. I remember well the splendid marble staircase with a balustrade of glass, and also that among the guests was the late Countess of Warwick, a vision of regal loveliness, and I still remember her as one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen.

Devonshire House has now gone the same way as Lansdowne House, which lay immediately behind it, Grosvenor House, Dorchester House and so many of the London residences of the great. Sometimes I walked through the narrow passage by which the gardens of Devonshire and Lansdowne Houses were divided, and remember the iron posts at either end which were said to have been placed there after a mounted highwayman had escaped his pursuers by riding his horse through the passage and up the steps into Berkeley Street. Little things like this which recall the storied past always fascinated me even as a boy.

Immediately opposite our queer little house in Old Queen Street was a palatial residence overlooking St. James's Park. This belonged to Baron Hirsch, the famous Austrian financier. Often on Sunday evenings he used to give wonderful musical parties, when artists of world renown—Melba, Caruso and the like—were engaged to entertain his guests. In summer-time, when the windows were open, it was sometimes possible for us to enjoy the music almost as comfortably as if we had been sitting in a stall in the Albert Hall. I recollect on several occasions seeing a plain plum-coloured one-horse brougham at

the door, in which the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII, used to arrive unostentatiously—not only, it was said, for the musical entertainment but also for the baccarat parties with which the evening concluded.

In those days Old Queen Street was purely a residential thoroughfare, with the single exception of the Irish Office at the top of the street close to the old Cockpit steps, of which the very name revives memories of the past. Now I believe there is not a single private residence in the street, and indeed most of the houses have been pulled down and replaced with imposing blocks of offices to house the Department of Overseas Trade and other Government Departments. It can hardly be considered as a change for the better, as the houses I remember were for the most part of charming Queen Anne and Georgian design similar to some that fortunately remain round the corner in Queen Anne's Gate.

Of course there have been improvements in certain directions, particularly in the removal of a notorious slum known as Lewisham Street on which our back windows looked out, and where it was not unusual for somebody to be half murdered on Saturday night, and down which it was said no policeman dared to venture alone.

At the back, too, in Tothill Street, which lies parallel to Old Queen Street, there was in those days a vast music-hall and "Fun Fair" known as the Royal Westminster Aquarium. The Aquarium, which derived its name from one or two glass tanks in which a few fish used to swim dejectedly, was a place where all tastes were catered for, and I enjoyed there many thrilling performances. There was a young lady who was literally shot out of a cannon into a huge net. There was another who dived from the roof—where she looked a tiny speck—into a small tank of water some eighteen or twenty feet square. There was Sandow, the strong man who lifted enormous weights and broke chains by the expansion of his muscles; Diavolo, the "Death Defying Wonder", as he was described on the bills, who looped a gigantic loop on a push bicycle; Sacco, the fasting man; two other men who entered into a competition to see which could be hung by the neck for the longer period; a hypnotist, who made members of the audience swallow pins and needles and do all sorts of ridiculous things, and innumerable other similar attractions. There were prize fights, theatrical performances and every kind of sideshow.

At one end of the Aquarium was a dingy theatre known as the Imperial. This was subsequently bought by Mrs. Langtry; not a very good actress, but one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. She razed it to the ground and rebuilt it on the most lavish scale. Although perhaps the most elegant theatre in London, it was never a success, and after a very few years was included in a general demolition scheme to make way for the erection of the Wesleyan Central Hall and adjacent blocks of offices.

Lewis Waller, the finest romantic actor I can remember—of a type which seems non-existent today—took the Imperial for a time, and I saw him there in one of his greatest successes, the wholly delightful play, *Monsieur Beaucaire*.

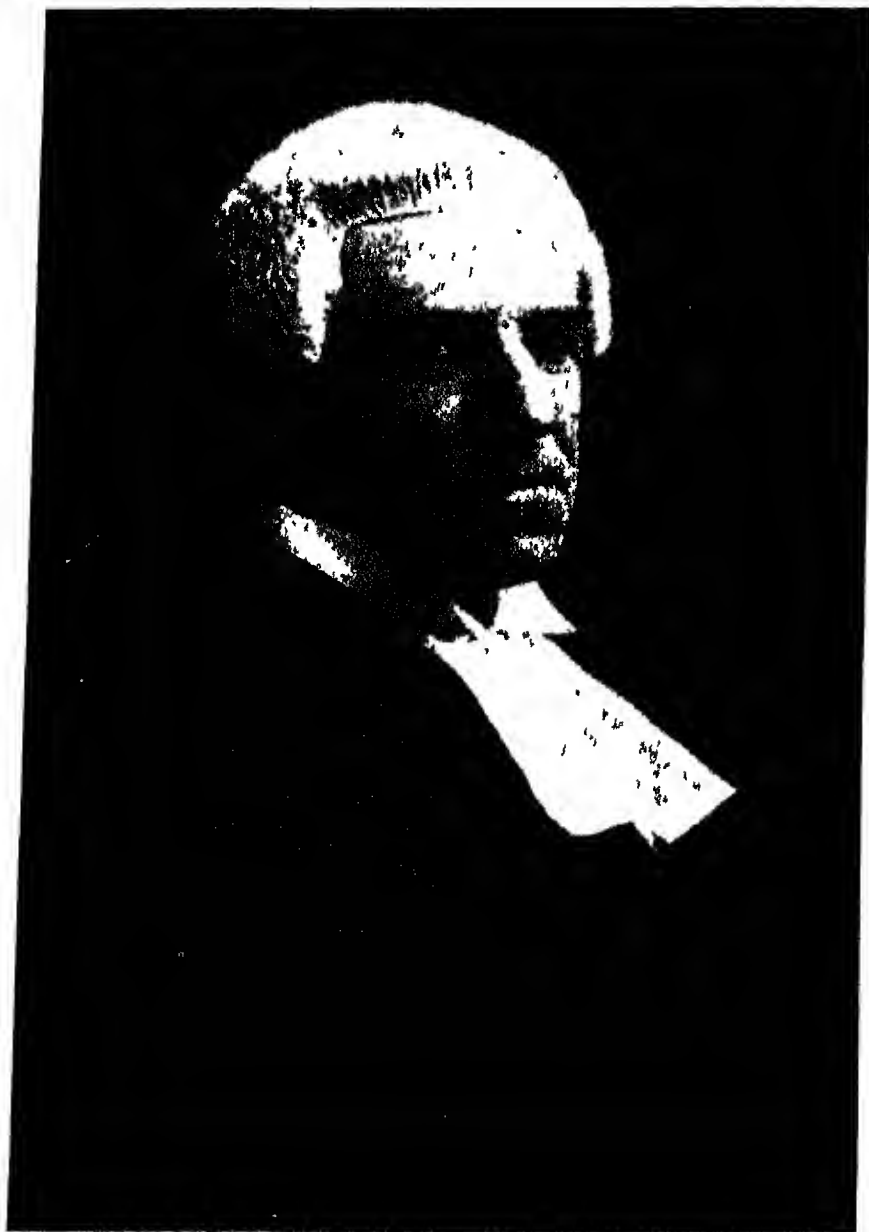
In a few years the demand for office accommodation in Westminster encroached upon our residential backwater to such an extent that we had to move. So far as I was concerned, it was distinctly a change for the better, as we went for a time to live in my grandfather's delightful house at Wallington in Surrey. At that time, too, my father had been appointed to the Bench, and our material circumstances had improved. Wallington Lodge was a long, white-walled,

two-storied house with green wooden shutters, situated in four acres of grounds, and had all the amenities of an exceptionally pleasant country house. A short circular drive led up to the front door round a magnificent weeping willow. A long passage or hall ran right through the house, with a glimpse through glass doors at the other end of green lawns and rose trees. The living-rooms all opened off the hall, and consisted of a fine dining-room and drawing-room, library, morning-room and billiard-room—with a large conservatory running the whole of one side of the house and possessing an unusually fine grape-vine. This was indeed a welcome change from our somewhat cramped quarters in Westminster. There was in addition good stabling for two or three horses, and a coach-house containing a rather old-fashioned brougham, two waggonettes, a victoria and a dog-cart. We had many fine games dodging in and out of these vehicles. But the greatest attraction was the garden. It had been laid out by the famous Joseph Paxton, who designed and built the Crystal Palace, and he had with consummate skill transformed a couple of fields, as it was originally, into a garden full of charming vistas, lawns and arbours. On one side, out of view of the house, was a well-stocked kitchen-garden, and on the other an orchard; whilst in the middle, facing the house, was a spacious lawn, on which we used to play the then immensely popular game of croquet. This was flanked by some fine trees with a dazzlingly colourful herbaceous border at the back, while beyond lay a small forest of rose-trees, and elsewhere there were glasshouses full of peaches and nectarines; a specially constructed underground cellar for growing mushrooms, and in a remote corner a pigsty with several fine porkers, one or two beehives and a fowl-run for about a hundred chickens.

It will thus be seen that Wallington was something of a paradise for a town-bred boy like myself, who had not hitherto had an opportunity of sampling any of these delights.

Before my grandfather took it over, the house had originally belonged to my great-uncle, Edmund Cooper, who was a somewhat remarkable character. As a boy, with very little education and without friends, money or influence, he had walked from Norwich to London, supported himself in some miraculous way for many years, ultimately qualifying as a civil engineer. He joined the firm of Sir Joseph Bazalgette, who had the contract for the Thames Embankment, and in course of time became their right-hand man; indeed it was Cooper who was said to have sustained the main burden of that remarkable engineering feat, although, as so often happens, it was not he who received the most credit and honour. He brought with him to Wallington as an interesting souvenir one of the bronze lions' heads which can still be seen at intervals along the whole length of the Embankment. This he put on a small bank and had it painted in natural colours, so that it gave visitors quite a shock, as it looked exactly like a fierce beast emerging from its lair. I have often wondered what became of that lion when in course of time Wallington developed from a picturesque old-world village into a suburban "dormitory". Ultimately Wallington Lodge itself was pulled down, and the whole estate covered with working-class villas, so that it is now almost impossible to make out where the house originally stood.

When my great-uncle retired he was a comparatively wealthy man; and in settling down at Wallington had the ambition to become, as it were, the squire of the village. He was legitimately proud of having made his way unaided in the world, and, considering his lack of education and material advantages, he had certainly done well. He was proud, too, of his house and grounds, and being



James A. Kent

MY FATHER



[Scames, Oxford]

THE AUTHOR AS "ANGELO" IN "MEASURE FOR MEASURE"
O.U.D.S., 1906

by nature a kindly and hospitable man, was looking forward to entertaining his friends and neighbours. In pursuance of this idea he spent quite a lot of money on improvements, and even had a new and magnificent staircase put in at a cost of nearly a thousand pounds down which three or four people could walk abreast. On this staircase hung a life-size portrait of Lord Nelson. Whenever this was commented upon by visitors, my uncle would reply casually and with obvious satisfaction: "Ah, yes, a kinsman of mine." As his own origins were wrapped in a certain amount of obscurity, he was delighted to possess one ancestor of distinction, however remote, whom he could consider as his own.

Unfortunately, however, his social aspirations were largely knocked on the head by his wife, whom we children used to refer to disrespectfully as the old dragon. She was one of those masterful, unpleasant persons who suffer from an irresistible craving to assert their authority. Doubtless in my uncle's working days he was so much away from home that there was no open breach between them; and later he gave way so often for the sake of peace, as many others have done in like circumstances, that ultimately it became second nature—with the result that when I remember him best he was a somewhat crushed and crotchety old man who hardly ever troubled to open his mouth when his wife was in the room.

Nevertheless he delighted to see the house filled at Christmas and other times with as many members of the family as could find accommodation, and we were generally a fairly large party. Christmas Day was, however, an occasion I recall with somewhat mixed feelings. Of course there was the thrill of opening one's presents. We did not any longer hang up stockings or pillow-cases as in the days of infancy, but all the parcels for everyone in the house were placed haphazard on the table in the morning-room; and after breakfast we all trooped in and extracted from the pile those that bore our names. Before this, however, there was the daily routine of family prayers, a Victorian custom which has fortunately been abandoned, as it often created more irreverence than religious fervour. But the procedure was always the same. Every morning, directly breakfast was over—and except in case of illness no one would have dared to have had it in bed—my uncle rang the bell, and the whole domestic staff came in and placed themselves on chairs round the wall. We each in turn read a verse from the Scriptures, and then knelt down while my uncle recited the prayers and Collect for the day. On Christmas morning I am afraid the minds of the younger ones were far more occupied with the presents in the adjoining room than with their religious devotions. Christmas Day ranking as a Sunday, we all had to go to church, and on our return partook of a light lunch, milk and buns or sherry and biscuits, as the case might be, for dinner was at the almost unbelievable hour of four o'clock and lasted about one hour and a half. Then the grown-ups sat down in an atmosphere of solemnity to a game of whist, whilst we youngsters were sent to the so-called "house-keeper's" room in the servants' quarters, and adjured not to make a noise. This we immediately forgot, and constant messages would be sent out that we were disturbing uncle and aunt's whist; all the same we had quite a lot of fun.

When in course of time my uncle and aunt passed on, within a few months of each other, my grandfather on my mother's side took over the house; and in order that he should not be quite alone, my father, mother and I went to live there. My grandfather, David William Young, was a sturdily built, stoutish

man, with a massive head and fine white beard. He had a great physical resemblance to Lord Salisbury, who was then Prime Minister. This curious likeness led on one or two occasions to amusing consequences. At the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 my father managed to secure tickets for himself and my grandfather to attend the naval review at Spithead. When they arrived at Waterloo Station they began to press their way through the throng of other guests; but immediately the stationmaster came bustling up and conducted them to a reserved first-class compartment. Into this he bowed them, and as soon as they were seated turned to my grandfather and said: "I hope your lordship will be quite comfortable." My father then realized that a mistake had been made, and explained that this was not the Prime Minister. They had reluctantly to leave the reserved carriage and find accommodation as best they could in some other part of the train.

My grandfather Young had many little idiosyncrasies. One was his mania for gloating over old volumes of *Punch*, of which he possessed a complete set. He would chuckle over these for hours, which always struck me as curious, for he was not a man who otherwise betrayed much sense of humour.

Then again, nothing apparently gave him a greater thrill than to read in the newspaper the column of "Other People's Wills", and to note the amounts for which various friends and acquaintances had "cut up", as he put it. He also insisted two or three times a week on personally bringing home fish for dinner. This he would purchase at a pet shop of his close to London Bridge, and solemnly carry all the way to Wallington in a dilapidated old fish-basket which he had had for years. I often noticed, when travelling home with him, the apprehensive glances of his fellow passengers when he entered the railway carriage and carefully placed on the rack this terrible old basket, from which occasionally a distinctly fish-like smell would emerge. He was, however, a shrewd, kindly, easy-going man, and we all lived very pleasantly together for several years.

At Wallington I was taught to ride by an old groom, Gooding, who was quite a character in his way. No one ever dared to refer to him without the prefix "Mr." I remember hearing, to my youthful indignation, one of the maids calling out to someone: "Please tell Mr. Gooding Gervais wants the dogcart." He was an old soldier and a first-class horseman, and in learning from him something of the equestrian art I was certainly put through it, which was doubtless all to the good.

It was with my grandfather that I went to my first Derby. We drove from Wallington to Epsom—a distance of about ten miles—in a small but smart dogcart; and although overshadowed by the numerous splendid four-in-hands and other imposing equipages—it was, of course, before the days of the motor-car—our appearance certainly did not pass unnoticed; in fact my grandfather, with his flowing white beard, resplendent in frock-coat and grey topper, with a small schoolboy seated by his side, attracted many amused glances from the gaily dressed occupants of the more impressive vehicles which rattled by, and evoked satirical comments of "Look at grandpa!" "Ain't they toffs?" and so on from the costers and others of the *oi polloi* who lined the roadside. Anyhow, we had a great day, and I thoroughly enjoyed my first glimpse of this famous race-meeting, the only place in the world—so it is said—where one can see a million people gathered together at the same time.

But now let us return to school. From Wallington I travelled up to London Bridge every morning, and for the first time in my life was the proud possessor of a season ticket. I have not very many recollections of my schooldays nor did I make many friends there, but on the whole the educational facilities were good. The average size of the class was forty, a fact which would doubtless horrify progressive educationalists today, but I do not believe that the quality of the education suffered in consequence, or that we lacked adequate personal attention.

The high spots of my schooldays were the "Beaufoy & Mortimer" prize days. The City of London School is the only one I know of in which the study of Shakespeare is a compulsory subject; moreover, the lavish endowments of the school made it possible for specially generous prizes to be awarded, to encourage the study of English literature and for delivery and declamation. Elocution was an extra, but we were fortunate in having an elocution master of outstanding ability and distinction in Ernest Pertwee, whose son Roland is now well-known as an actor, novelist and playwright. I have never met anyone with a greater charm of manner than Ernest Pertwee. Exceptionally good-looking, he was always beautifully dressed, generally in a silk-faced frock-coat, exquisite linen, black satin tie and pearl pin. A most elegant person altogether, and one who seemed to me at the time the *beau idéal* of what I myself would like to be. As I was apparently considered a promising pupil, he was most generous in giving me many hours of gratuitous private tuition in his own home in Tite Street, Chelsea, from which I had much pleasure and, I believe, no little profit. At all events, as a result I was able to achieve a small triumph by winning, when only fourteen years of age, the elocution medal open to the whole school. All the other competitors were several years older than myself and were in the fifth and sixth forms. Although encouraged to do so by Pertwee, it was considered rather "cheek" for me to enter. My form master was distinctly sarcastic, remarking before the whole class that he thought I might endeavour to obtain some little genuine education first! It will therefore be imagined with what satisfaction I quietly returned to my place in the class after the competition was over. Presently my form master looked up from the book he was reading and said:

"Well, Rentoul, back again? And who won the medal?"

"I did, sir."

There was a moment or two of somewhat grim silence, and then—

"Did you, indeed? H'm—h'm. Dear me—h'm. Well, I suppose we must congratulate you. Boys, give him a cheer!"

And as the whole class was awarded a half-holiday to celebrate the event, I achieved a temporary popularity, which, while it lasted, was gratifying to my self-esteem. But my greatest pleasure in the whole business was in being able to announce the good news to my father, who was always so delighted by any success I attained. I told him how we had been summoned into the room, one by one, to do our pieces before the headmaster, Pertwee, and a jury of sixth form boys; and that when we had all performed we were called back into the room, and the headmaster announced that, on this occasion, the judges were unanimous; and added that, although sometimes the competitors were so nearly matched it was difficult to make the award, this time one boy was so much better than the others that there had been no trouble in deciding.

"Then, of course, I knew I had won," I said.

"Why was that?" asked my father quizzically, and was much amused when I explained that although I realized I might possibly be beaten I really could

not believe that anyone could have been so much better than myself as the headmaster had indicated.

After that I was a frequent performer in the various histrionic displays which were given annually in the great hall of the school on the "Beaufoy & Mortimer" prize days. On these occasions, which were quite distinct from the main prize day at the end of the summer term when the Lord Mayor attended in state to distribute the prizes, it was customary to invite some distinguished actor to present the awards.

I remember best of all Sir Henry Irving's visit. It is difficult for any of the younger generation today to realize the position held by Irving at that time in the artistic life of London. The Lyceum was far more than a theatre; it was an institution, a temple of art. A first night there was one of the great events of the year, and was attended by everyone who was anyone in artistic, literary, musical or theatrical circles, as well as by political and social leaders and "Society" at large. For a production at the Lyceum—as at His Majesty's under Beerbohm Tree—the greatest actors were engaged to play in it; the finest musicians were employed to write the incidental music; the most famous artists to design the scenery and costumes; and pervading it all, directing, controlling, inspiring the whole effort, was the somewhat overpowering yet beloved personality of Henry Irving. His position was unique. The Lyceum was like no other theatre, and it has left no successors.

It was therefore a great occasion and one to be remembered when Irving paid us a visit. I recall as if it were yesterday the dignity and grace with which he entered the crowded hall, and stopped to acknowledge the full-throated cheers from six hundred enthusiastic schoolboys. Before the actual prize distribution some of us did recitations and scenes from Shakespeare, etc., for which we had been carefully trained by Mr. Pertwee. Among the extracts selected was one from *The Critic*, in which I took a small part; and I was also permitted to inflict on the audience Tennyson's "Charge of the Heavy Brigade". For a boy of fourteen it will easily be appreciated what an event this was. A year later, in the presence of Sir Squire Bancroft—another "doyen" of the stage—I was chosen to play Shylock in the Trial Scene from the *Merchant of Venice* and Wolsey in a scene from *Henry VIII*, as well as recite Newbolt's "Fighting Téméraire".

Such other schoolboy triumphs as I am able to recall were the winning on several occasions of the English essay and the acquisition of various prizes for English literature and modern languages. Being blessed with an exceptionally good memory, these subjects came fairly easily to me. The outstanding weakness, however, in my mental equipment was an unfortunate inability to grasp or understand the principles of higher mathematics. Simple addition, multiplication and division were all very well, but Euclid, algebra and trigonometry struck me as double Dutch—or perhaps I should say Greek; I could never make head or tail of them. Yet it was not for want of trying, and for a time a lady who was herself a brilliant mathematician was engaged to coach me privately in these subjects. I regret to record, however, that after some months she went off her head and was found early one morning walking in the garden stark naked, apparently imagining she was Eve in the Garden of Eden. I hope I was not in any way to blame for this catastrophe; but after that I gave up mathematics as a bad job.

On the whole, however, my schooldays were uneventful. Even in the great world outside the school walls, life during these later Victorian days was

comfortably devoid of political excitement at home or shattering international events abroad. Passions, of course, ran fairly high over such questions as Home Rule for Ireland, Protection versus Free Trade, and a few other matters which seem utterly trivial in comparison with the troubles we have had since. Indeed, until the outbreak of the South African War, the country had enjoyed an era of peace and prosperity such as it has never known since and possibly may never know again in our time.

That a handful of Boers should venture to challenge the mighty power of Britain was a nasty shock, but it did not really affect the life of the nation, and in any event it was all a very long way off. Starting with that easy optimism with which we have so often embarked upon such tragic enterprises, public opinion was confident that the Army would eat its Christmas dinner in Pretoria. The news of Buller's defeat at Magersfontein came as a rude awakening. As a small boy on my way to school I saw the posters in the Strand giving the news, and heard the raucous cries of the newsboys. I remember the gloom which the tidings caused, for we had not then suffered the upheaval of a world war. Everyone in the street stared at one another in consternation. Surely it could not be possible? Redvers Buller, one of our most gallant generals, the idol of the Army, defeated by a lot of Dutch farmers? This was intolerable. The British lion shook himself angrily. Volunteers were called for, and Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, with Sir Herbert Kitchener (afterwards Lord Kitchener) as his Chief of Staff, was sent out to take over the supreme command. Then followed the long, wearing months, during which the fortunes of the opposing forces fluctuated, and news was anxiously awaited of Mafeking and Ladysmith, where our fellow countrymen had endured for months on end the horrors of a siege. When these towns were finally relieved the school was given a holiday; and on Mafeking night I was taken to see the illuminations in the streets, consisting for the most part of enormous medallions and set pieces of coloured glass lighted up either by gas or electricity—generally the former.

But it is the crowds I shall never forget; and indeed the scenes that night have added a new word to the English language. The news of the relief of Mafeking came very suddenly, and the police had apparently made no adequate plans for controlling the traffic. With some difficulty we made our way as far as the Mansion House. There, however, many streets converged; and with all these human rivers pouring into the centre and there being no outlet, many thought that literally their last hour had come and that they would be crushed to death by the pressure of the throng. Women were screaming and fainting, and yet there seemed no way of damming the stream. Fortunately, however, something turned the tide down one of the side streets, and we were able to escape. I have never been in a crowd since without recalling that unpleasant experience.

Finally came peace; our Army returned home amid great rejoicings. The C.I.V. (City Imperial Volunteers), London's pride, were given a magnificent reception and entertainment at the Guildhall, and I also had the good fortune to be present in that historic building when Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener were accorded the Freedom of the City. The contrast between the two men made a lasting impression upon me. "Bobs" was genial and kindly in appearance, and was obviously pleased with his reception and gratified by the enthusiasm of those who welcomed him. Kitchener, on the other hand, forbidding-looking and austere, evidently hated the whole thing; his features never relaxed, and he looked as uncomfortable as he doubtless felt.

Among other pictures that rise to the mind is Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. I was with my father, and saw the procession from a special stand erected for Members of Parliament just in front of the Speaker's house close to Westminster Bridge. The occasion was unique: for sixty years the Queen had reigned, and her occupation of the throne had synchronized not only with the spread of cleaner and healthier ideals among the people, but with an unexampled increase in material prosperity as well; and it was felt that this was in a large measure due to the example and tone set by the Queen herself. All were anxious to show their respect and affection for the small, stout, somewhat insignificant figure in black who was the centre of so much pomp and brilliance.

Then there was the day, two or three years later, when we heard with a sense of personal loss that the Queen was dead, and realized that for good or ill the Victorian era and all that it had stood for was a thing of the past. The scenes in connection with her funeral were such as had never been paralleled. Most of the London shops voluntarily closed for two days, and nearly everyone wore deepest black.

Many years afterwards, when staying with Mrs. Arthur James at Coton House, Rugby, for some amateur theatricals, I was told a story by "Fritz" Ponsonby (afterwards Lord Sysonby), which I have never seen in print before. He was at the time private secretary to King Edward VII, a post which he held throughout the entire reign.

The first part of the Queen's funeral obsequies took place in London, and on the next day the coffin was to be removed to Windsor for interment. It was placed, as is usual, on a gun-carriage, and when starting off a horse gave a sudden lurch, which caused one of the traces to break. An extremely awkward pause occurred in the solemn proceedings; a new trace could not be procured immediately, and King Edward, riding at the head of the cavalcade of kings and potentates, was fuming at the delay. The situation was saved, however, by a team of naval gunners in the procession, who untied some ropes from their guns and offered to draw the coffin to its destination. The horses were promptly unharnessed; the "handy men" attached the ropes, and in a few minutes the cortège proceeded on its way. But that evening the King sent for Ponsonby, and angrily declared that he would not risk another such *contre-temps* the next day. "The Navy must take on the job," he said, "and the arrangements must be altered accordingly."

"But, Sir," remonstrated the tactful secretary, "although the incident was most unfortunate, it was an unavoidable accident; and naturally there has been a good deal of heart-burning about it. If the Navy is to replace the Army in the ceremony tomorrow it will be regarded as a serious slur, and may lead to an immense amount of friction between the two services."

The King reflected for a few moments, and then said:

"Very well; I see your point. Let the arrangements stand; but I make you personally responsible, and if anything goes wrong I will *never* speak to you again!"

Faced with this threat, Ponsonby said he had the team of horses and a gun-carriage out in Windsor Park at 5 a.m. the next morning, and gave them a terrible grueling, making them stop and start over and over again—to test thoroughly the whole equipment. As a result all went well, and I have no doubt His Majesty, as well as Ponsonby, gave a sigh of relief when it was all safely over.

Then there was the theatre. For me the stage has always had an irresistible fascination; it was not merely that I was fond of acting, but I was intensely interested in everything connected with the theatre. As a boy, whenever I could get hold of a shilling I hastened off to the gallery of a theatre. What memories are evoked thereby! What splendid plays and fine acting!

I have no doubt that the disappearance of the actor-manager was a disaster for the theatre. They created artistic standards and traditions which do not really exist today to anything like the same extent, or so it seems to me.

Among the plays I remember best were the magnificent Shakespearean revivals of Beerbohm Tree. I am convinced that nothing more admirable has ever been seen on the London stage, either from the point of view of production, acting or spectacular effect. I thought nothing of waiting three or four hours in order to get a front seat in the gallery; in fact it was part of the thrill; and from this vantage point I saw, not once but several times, my favourite Shakespearean play, *Julius Caesar*, with its impressive Forum scene. I can still visualize the great column and statues when Tree, as Mark Antony, made his famous speech to the howling mob. In the diversity of feelings and emotions displayed by each individual member of the crowd this scene was in itself a triumph of stage management. I have seen many productions of *Julius Caesar* since—for this is a play I never miss if possible—but there has not been one of them in which the crowd was handled with anything like the same ingenuity and dramatic effect.

In my opinion Tree himself never acted better than in this scene, although usually he was more successful in comedy than tragedy: his Malvolio and Falstaff were perfect gems of humour. I also saw him as Caliban, Bottom, Antony (in *Antony and Cleopatra*), with Constance Collier as a dazzlingly seductive Queen of Egypt, Henry VIII, Hamlet, Macbeth, Svengali, d'Artagnan, Fagin, Colonel Newcome and a whole range of other parts, in which his versatility was altogether amazing.

But although Beerbohm Tree was my own particular "idol", it cannot be pretended that his position and status in the world of the theatre ever equalled that of Henry Irving. Although Tree, in my opinion, was the better actor, Irving was undoubtedly the greater artist; and Irving had throughout his career so closely associated with him, that one hardly ever mentioned the one without the other, that incomparable actress, Ellen Terry. Although I never saw her at her best, the music of her voice, the grace of her movements, and the charm and sympathy she seemed to radiate throughout the theatre were things no one could ever forget. The three plays in which I saw them together—*Robespierre*, *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Henry VIII*—have always remained among the most memorable experiences of my life.

There were, however, many other plays and players of whom I still retain as vivid a memory as though I had seen them yesterday.

For instance, shall I ever forget the sensational production of *The Sign of the Cross*, with Wilson Barrett as the haughty Roman patrician, Marcus Superbus, and the almost unearthly beauty of Maude Jeffries as the Christian maid, Mercia? Among the thousands who flocked to see it were many who had never set foot in a theatre before. Sermons were preached about it from the pulpit, and upon the lives of innumerable playgoers it exercised an undoubted influence for good.

There were, of course, some highbrows who criticized it as cheap melodrama and claptrap, but to my mind it was a sincere and inspiring piece of dramatic work, written by Wilson Barrett himself—no doubt with a keen eye to theatri-

cal effect—but none the worse on that account. The recent film with the same title was a mere travesty of the play, in which the whole theme was cheapened and submerged under an avalanche of spectacle and extravagance which had nothing to do with the actual story. Everything was so overdone that it reminded me of the American film producer who was directing another play with a biblical setting, and is said to have inquired who were the twelve people grouped together in a corner of the set. When told they were the twelve apostles, he exclaimed: "Aw, let's make 'em forty!"

I saw Wilson Barrett, who was a fine actor of the old school, in many of his greatest successes, such as *The Silver King*, a first-rate melodrama if ever there was one, written by that prolific dramatist, Henry Arthur Jones; *The Christian* and *The Manxman* by Hall Caine, as well as in certain Shakespearean rôles, such as Othello and Hamlet. Surely this latter is the greatest play ever written? It is a part every actor longs to play, and in which no one can entirely fail. No matter how many times one sees it there is always something fresh, and the character of the "Moody Dane" never lacks novelty. I suppose I must have seen at least a dozen Hamlets, and each painted a portrait of this intriguing character which was in some respects stimulating and original—whether played by Beerbohm Tree (in fair hair and beard), Martin Harvey, Forbes-Robertson, Wilson Barrett, Sir Frank Benson, H. B. Irving, Sarah Bernhardt, John Barrymore, Godfrey Tearle, or John Gielgud.

We all have our ideas as to how the part should be played, and it must therefore be purely a matter of opinion as to who was the best. To my mind Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and, in recent times, John Gielgud most nearly approach the ideal.

At all events those were the days when drama—especially of the "cloak and dagger" variety—was at its zenith. Nowadays we are apparently too sophisticated, too blasé, for this kind of thing. It may also be that we no longer possess actors with sufficient *panache* to tackle such rôles. Nearly all the plays and actors which I remember best from my boyhood days had this indefinable quality. To have seen Lewis Waller in *Monsieur Beaucaire* and *The Three Musketeers*, Robert Lorraine in *Under the Red Robe*, Fred Terry and Julia Neilson in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, Sir John Martin Harvey in *The Breed of the Treshams* was an experience never to be forgotten. Of course I admit that some of the plays were a trifle crude and naive, but all the same they still seem to me to have had a romantic appeal and dramatic force far superior to the so-called "thrillers" and crook dramas of today.

But on these memories, fascinating as they are, I must not unduly linger.

In the summer of 1897 I had a piece of bad luck. Whilst engaged in a friendly "catch as catch can" with one of my cousins, I fell and dislocated my right elbow. This was before the general use of X-rays, and the country doctor who attended me treated the injury as a fracture instead of a dislocation, with the result that I have ever since suffered from a stiff right arm with a very limited range of movement. This prevented me from hoping to excel at two sports in which I was specially interested—tennis and rowing—and I have been seriously handicapped in every other game ever since. However, one can never tell whether bad luck may not turn out to be good luck. Because of this injury I was rejected from active military service by every tribunal—I think there were nine of them—to which I submitted myself during the war of 1914-18, when I was, of course, of military age, and had to be content with a

staff job at home. Had it not been for this physical defect I should no doubt in due course have found myself in the front line in France or elsewhere, and this story might never have been told. As has been well said, one must never forget that when misfortunes come it is quite possible they are saving one from something worse, or when one apparently makes a mistake it sometimes serves one better than following the best advice. Life is a whole, and luck is a whole, and no part of either can be separated from the rest.

As only to be expected from one who was himself a senior scholar in modern languages, my father was most anxious for me to be fluent in French and German. When I was sixteen I was therefore sent for a time to stay with M. and Mme Mouquet at Dieppe.

M. Mouquet was a fierce-looking little Frenchman, whose amiable disposition entirely belied his appearance. He had close-cropped bristly hair, a large moustache and a strong sense of humour. He and Madame, a kind-hearted "bourgeoise" and a marvellous cook, had for many years owned a successful restaurant in Paris, and afterwards a similar, if somewhat less pretentious, establishment at Dieppe, close to the Gare Maritime. This latter was so profitable that it was not long before they were able to give up business altogether and retire to a delightful little house just outside Dieppe on the road to Puys, known as the Villa des Fleurs. It was here that I spent many happy months.

I remember Madame telling me that the two golden rules for success as a restaurateur were plentiful helpings and bright illumination. In fact she used to say the lights could hardly be too brilliant; they cheer people up and attract custom. I have often thought that the astounding success of Messrs. J. Lyons and Co. may be in no small degree attributed to the attention they pay to these two points.

Whilst at the Villa des Fleurs I worked hard at my French, studying by myself for two or three hours every morning and afterwards going for a long walk with Monsieur, or making excursions in a small pony-cart to the Forêt d'Arques, the Château d'Eu, Varangeville-sur-mer and other beauty spots in the neighbourhood. In the evening friends would often come in, or we would play écarté, or I would read aloud to Monsieur and Madame in order to improve my accent. In this way I was able to introduce them to the works of M. Charles Dickens, of whom I regret to say they had never heard. I read aloud to them in French the whole of *L'Ami Commun* (*Our Mutual Friend*) and *David Copperfield*, which in spite of my bad pronunciation they professed to enjoy—*toujours la politesse*.

The great excitement, however, was when one of the "fairs" so popular in France visited Dieppe. They were a unique feature of French provincial life in those days, and essentially different from anything we have over here. There were, of course, the usual swings and roundabouts, the gimcrack stalls loaded with cheap goods, sweets and the inevitable *pain d'épice*. In addition, one often found sideshows which at all events strove to reach a somewhat higher artistic level and a greater originality than anything one usually finds in this country. It was in a "fit-up" theatre at Dieppe Fair, for instance, that I made my first acquaintance with French drama. I remember seeing there with great enjoyment, although crudely produced and acted, such plays as Georges Ohnet's famous comedy *Le Maître des Forges*, and the thrilling drama of *Les deux Gosses*, which had an immense success in London as *The Two Little Vagabonds*;

also one or two plays by Molière, notably *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Le Médecin malgré Lui*, also a Palais Royal farce or two, full of equivocal situations and Parisian slang, which often required a little discreet explanation from M. Mouquet, who usually accompanied me and was an equally enthusiastic patron of the drama.

Many years later I witnessed at one of these fairs a curious and popular form of entertainment known as a "Marathon" dance. It was really an endurance test, and the thrill for the spectators was to see who among the competitors could last out the longest. Large prizes were offered, sometimes amounting to as much as 20,000 francs, to the couple who were able to continue dancing for the longest period of time. The first time I looked in on one of these weird competitions I found that the competitors had been dancing—if mere rhythmical swaying to the music can be so designated—for six days and six nights. When I went there again a fortnight later they were still hard at it. I have been told since that the record is forty-nine days and nights. The contestants, who came from all parts of France, were required to enter in couples. There was a quarter of an hour's break in every hour, during which each competitor was provided with a couch on which to rest while nurses who were in attendance massaged their feet and a doctor took their pulses and sounded their hearts. A couple of these couches were usually brought on to the dance-floor during the "break", and two of the competitors would lie down in full view of the audience. So exhausted were they that no sooner had their heads touched the pillow than they were in a deep sleep—a sleep so profound that when the bell sounded after the quarter of an hour for the dance to be resumed they often had to be shaken violently and forcibly set on their feet. In one or two cases the doctor stood them upside down in order to cause a rush of blood to the head and restore consciousness. Then the dreary swaying round the floor continued. Some of the girl dancers almost fell asleep on their partners' shoulders. If, in the opinion of the doctor, any competitor was physically unable to continue, he or she was ordered off the floor.

There was also an hour's break from seven to eight in the morning, when all the competitors had to do their toilet and change their clothing but were not permitted to rest during this period. The dancing booth in which this grim contest took place was at times crowded to suffocation, and included M. le Maire and many local notabilities. Occasionally a spectator would call out: "Twenty francs [or 50 or even 100] if No. 15 couple [or whichever it might be] will give a special dance." Then the centre of the floor was cleared—the other dancers still continuing their swaying on the outer rim—whilst the couple in question would pull themselves together by a supreme effort and dance a tango or fox-trot. From the onlookers' point of view the "sport" was to try to galvanize into life the most weary-looking pair on the floor. It was a purely sadistic pleasure to test in this way the limits of human endurance. Such an exhibition would not, of course, be tolerated in our own island either by the authorities or public opinion, but the French are in many ways a strange people.

Mention of these "fairs" reminds me that some years later at another of them, whilst on holiday at Juan-les-Pins, I came across a large crowd seeking to gain admission to a booth or tent over which was written the mystic words: "*Les Courses des Cafards*". Although ignorant of the meaning of *cafard*, I realized that this was a sporting event of some kind, and pushed my way in

with the rest. A sporting event indeed, and a strange one at that: the racing of cockroaches! On a large table the course had been laid out; it consisted of half a dozen narrow lanes, each one separated from the others by an inch-high wall of glass. The table itself was painted white except at the winning-post end, where it was black. The racing roaches were housed in little tin boxes upon which there shone a brilliant light, whilst the other end of the table was in darkness. The underlying essential of this sport—to which I believe there is some reference in the annals of the early Chinese Empire—is the insect's distaste for light. In shadow or darkness it will remain comparatively inanimate, but when once the light is thrown on it the cockroach runs like the devil towards the nearest spot of shadow or darkness it can find. Consequently when the races start the lids of the tin boxes are opened, and the inhabitants receive the full benefit of the bright light over their heads. They then run like mad down the narrow lines towards the darkness at the other end, encouraged by the shouts of their backers who have risked their francs or half francs on the prowess of their particular fancy.

I have read somewhere that an attempt was made to introduce the sport into America and to develop it on scientific lines. One of the difficulties, however, was that the ordinary household cockroach has a deep-rooted aversion to running in a straight line, and also that it has a somewhat unpleasant odour. On the advice of a celebrated entomologist an odourless straight-running cockroach was discovered known as the Florida field roach. Indeed, the learned scientist was, I understand, much annoyed when photographs appeared in the *Daily Mirror* with the caption: "Bug Expert Handpicks Cockroach Racing Stable". However, the whole thing died a natural death. The Florida insects were found to be too capricious in their feeding habits and extremely susceptible to any change of climate. They expired by hundreds; and with its stables depleted the new sport collapsed for want of contestants.

It was at yet another French "fair" that I learned almost all I know about gynaecology. I noticed a tent with some lurid pictures outside informing the passer-by that all the "Secrets of Nature" could be fully learned within for the sum of one franc. On entering I found that the claim was not entirely unfounded, and my gaze was entranced by a series of life-size models depicting the development of the human species from its earliest pre-natal beginnings, through the various stages of pregnancy, into the finished article. There was also another series of models showing the most approved methods of midwifery and after-birth treatment. A thrilling entertainment for a young man of 16, as may be well imagined!

From France I went a year or two later to Berlin, where I stayed for nearly twelve months. It had been arranged that I should go as a paying guest to a certain Herr Wilhelm Strauss and family. Wilhelm Strauss was an old friend of my father's in the 'sixties, when they were students together at the Berlin University. The family consisted of Frau Strauss, three sons and a daughter; and it was considered that one good point in favour of the arrangement was that none of them spoke a single word of English. Under these circumstances, and as I did not know one word of German and was going to Germany for the first time, it was obvious that I was embarking on "uncharted seas". Certainly the first few weeks were difficult, and I was far from happy. All the same, I have no doubt it was the best way of learning, for I had no alternative but to try

to pick up the language somehow or other unless I wished to remain as silent as a Trappist monk.

The result was that in less than three months I was able to express myself with reasonable fluency and understand everything that was said to me; and before I left Berlin I could fairly claim to speak the language like a native. In addition, during the latter part of my stay I had a very good time, and must say I liked the Germans and found most of those I met cheerful and pleasant people.

Of course the Germany of those days before the First World War was very different from the Nazified Germany of Adolf Hitler. It is true that there existed even then an arrogant Prussian military caste, whose members swaggered about in handsome tight-fitting uniforms, wore moustaches carefully trained to sprout upwards like the Kaiser's, and adopted a supercilious air towards all other people, even to the extent sometimes of compelling ladies to step off the pathway into the road to make room for them. But, so far as I could judge, the attitude of the ordinary people towards the military was one of suppressed amusement, occasional irritation and ridicule, and yet on the whole intense secret pride. Although a little absurd in their exaggerated swagger and "side", it was felt that they represented the might and invincibility of Germany, and anyway they looked fine. Otherwise life went on much the same as in any other great city, without excessive interference by the authorities with the lives and habits of the people. There was certainly no Gestapo or police espionage, or any undue interference with individual liberty of thought and action. Yet it was clear even then that many of the more thoughtful Germans regarded war with Great Britain as a certainty, and the only question was when it would come. As a well-informed student of the University from whom I took conversation lessons said to me:

"It is not that your people and ours dislike each other as individuals; indeed in outlook and temperament we have a good deal in common. But the fact remains that you have managed to get hold of most of the best places of the world before we were fully developed, and naturally we want our share. As you won't give them up, force must decide, because Germany must expand; she must have *Lebensraum* for her population if she is to become a world power."

All of which has still—over forty years later—a somewhat familiar sound.

However, I did not bother much about international politics in those days. Even the First World War was ten years away, and Adolf Schicklegruber was merely an unpleasant little boy of 14.

Such then are some of the kaleidoscopic memories of my early years, and looking back, how many changes there have been!

The most staggering of them is the advance in scientific progress and achievement, especially in regard to light, travel and means of communication. Indeed, it is a strange fact that until less than a century ago there had been little real improvement in any of these vital matters since the dawn of mankind.

In my own lifetime, I have seen the invention, or at all events the adaptation to everyday use, of, *inter alia*, the telephone, the typewriter, electric light, the gramophone, the cinema, the motor-car, the aeroplane, wireless and television—things which would have been regarded by our grandparents as miracles beyond human comprehension. Some of them even puzzled our

parents more than a bit, as I can well remember. For instance, when the telephone was first made available to the public one of my aunts was staying with us for a few days before embarking on a cruise to the Mediterranean. Information was urgently required as to the time of sailing, and someone had the brilliant inspiration to use this new and strange means of communication. My father, mother and aunt repaired to the nearest telephone kiosk; but after trying for some time to manipulate the then somewhat complicated mechanism, my father and aunt found themselves completely baffled. My mother, however, was not to be beaten. "Let me have a try," she exclaimed impetuously, and snapping the receiver off the hook shouted into it: "Hallo! Hallo! Is that the ship?" Apparently she imagined that the instrument was a mechanical mind-reader, and could in some mysterious manner enable her to communicate with an unspecified person on an unspecified ship lying in an unspecified port without any number being dialled or any human or mechanical intervention being required!

There have also, of course, been many changes in social habits and conventions. Some of the old ones were perhaps too good to last. I often wonder whether the younger generation today really do have a better time than we had, in spite of greater freedom and lack of restraint. I know this is the common belief, but certainly we did not do so badly. Young men from the universities, for instance, with a few introductions and presentable manners, were even more in demand for dances and entertainments than they are today. Hostesses often borrowed one another's lists of available men; and it was by no means unusual to receive a card of invitation from Mrs. A. (whom one had never met) "with Mrs. B.'s compliments" scrawled across it.

Most of the dances took place in private houses, and not, as nowadays, in hotels, which gave them an altogether different atmosphere. Arrangements were generally on a lavish scale; there were banks of flowers everywhere, champagne was *ad lib.*, one danced into the early hours of the morning to the strains of one or other of the fashionable dance bands, such as Joyce or Herr Moritz Würm. A dance, however, was a much more strenuous affair than it is today, and one had to be in fairly good training to see it through to the end. Bostons, waltzes, lancers, valetas and barn dances were all popular. Of course everyone had a programme, and it was a point of honour for every young man to get it as well filled as possible, otherwise he would be playfully "ticked off" by his hostess and told he was not doing his duty. For a long dance it was advisable to take a clean collar and tie and one or two handkerchiefs, also an extra pair of white kid gloves, which were *de rigueur* in those days. Men took a good deal of trouble to remain spruce to the end; and this could only be done by dint of much tidying up at odd moments during the evening. We used to repair, somewhat dishevelled, to the lavatory, from which we would emerge later looking as spick and span as when we first started.

Some of these pre-First-World-War dances were splendid affairs, and done in a way that later became extremely rare and is now almost impossible on grounds of expense. I remember particularly the magnificent balls at Gray's Inn in the lovely oak-panelled hall, which, owing to the attentions of the Luftwaffe, is, alas, no more, when the walls were hung and the roof festooned with something like 30,000 roses; the effect was beautiful beyond words and the scent almost overpowering. The hall and gardens decorated with hundreds of fairy lights made an unforgettable setting.

Of course conventional ideas have undergone a big change, particularly as to relations between the sexes. The modern young man or woman would probably regard pre-war (1914-18) deportment as ludicrously straitlaced and unenterprising. Christian names were not bandied about among complete strangers as they are today, and terms of endearment were regarded as possessing some significance. As far as my own experience went, young men stuck to the rules of the game and respected the laws of hospitality as then understood. The débutante whom they were permitted to escort to a dance or to the theatre was preserved, as it were, in an invisible glass case. Any young man who did not regard a "lady", a term which was considered then to have a definite meaning, as sacrosanct sexually was considered an outsider; whilst flirtatious advances towards a girl you had only just met were looked upon as bad form. No doubt most girls of today would express the opinion that it must all have been terribly dull and boring, but I am sure that any woman who remembers those mid-Victorian and Edwardian days will confirm what I say. Yet on the whole we did have a pretty good time, in spite of the greater formality and the strict social etiquette, which was regarded as obligatory. For instance, after a dance or dinner-party a young man was under an obligation to call on his hostess at an early date, generally the following Sunday afternoon, and as such callers were expected the lady in question generally made a point of being at home. This was often a bore, because it prevented one from discharging several such obligations in the same afternoon by merely leaving cards; but, on the other hand, if there happened to be an attractive daughter, it provided an opportunity for a further meeting.

On the whole, when I look back, especially to the years immediately prior to 1914, it seems to me that the social life of London was something we are never likely to see again. For those who had social position, money and leisure to enjoy it, a London "season" was a frenzy of gaiety.

Indeed, for this and other reasons, one feels somewhat sorry for the youth of today. Born into a troubled and tormented world, as it has been for the past twenty-five years, during which time most countries and peoples have been living on the edge of an abyss, they have never experienced the sense of security and peace such as those of a previous generation can still remember. As a result, young people nowadays—in spite of the greater freedom which is accorded them; in spite of their enterprise, vitality and self-confidence—seem to lose so much. There is less reticence, less restraint, fewer limitations to their personal inclinations; but, as a consequence, less elegance and less romance, or so it seems to me. How can there be when every young man expects to flirt almost to the limit with every attractive girl he meets, and every girl seems to take it for granted that he will do so? Christian names and the warmest epithets of endearment are common currency, even among those who scarcely know one another's surnames. There is no subject too intimate for discussion between acquaintances of the opposite sex; and many of them regard the whole institution of marriage with the utmost cynicism, and frankly admit that they do not expect their own marriage to last.

On the other hand, let me say at once that, with regard to the modern girl, I admire intensely her vitality, *joie de vivre*, self-reliance and readiness for any new experience or venture. These place her, in my opinion, above her predecessors, but there are just a few things about her I regret. One is her liking for gin and other spirits—not so much as a beverage, but because of the

kick she gets out of them, and I am convinced that, before the war at all events, the average young woman drank more than was good for her. Another is her blood-red nails, which often remind me of a bird of prey, and excessive make-up. On this matter, however, girls quite frankly do not consider the opinion of the opposite sex, and even make the excuse that although men may profess to dislike these things they are nevertheless more attracted by them than repelled. Personally I do not think it is so; and I dare say it is only a passing phase which war conditions may do much to remedy, since both cock-tails and cosmetics are increasingly hard to obtain, and are not encouraged in the Services, where so many girls are doing such fine work.

However, I am inexcusably wandering into controversial irrelevancies, so let me get back to my own story with this final remark: I am no mere *laudator temporis acti*. If some of the graces of life have disappeared and things are in some ways "not what they were", we have gained much in others. As one writer has said: apart from war periods, which are plain unadulterated hell for most people, let us believe that every age is on the whole the best, just as every spring is the most beautiful that ever happened. And indeed if it were not so, how many of us would be content and even anxious to go on living?

CHAPTER II

OXFORD: THE DRAMA AND POLITICS

NOR being able to send me to one of the big public schools because he was quite unable at the time to afford the £200 to £250 a year which it then cost to maintain a boy at Harrow, Winchester, Rugby or the like, my father was anxious I should complete my education at Oxford or Cambridge. As there were no family or other connections with either—my father, grandfather and great-grandfather having all been to Scottish and Irish Universities—the choice was left to me, and I plumped for Oxford. I was under the impression that Cambridge was more or less devoted to mathematics, which, as already explained, were to me something of a nightmare.

The only condition my father made was that I should first matriculate at Queen's College, Galway, one of the colleges of the Royal University of Ireland, in which he himself and many members of the family had been graduates, and also that I should sit for an entrance scholarship there.

I therefore travelled across Ireland to the City of the Tribes, where I am bound to confess I spent a somewhat gloomy fortnight. The country round Galway is depressing to a degree, as if Cromwell had swept a whole race out of existence, leaving only a few ghosts to take up their abode in what is now something of a wilderness, with stone crosses standing here and there, the origin and history of which are unknown, and ruins of what were once monasteries or cathedrals speaking of a cultured people long since vanished. Archaeologists, I am told, come from all parts of the world to visit the tombs of Carrowmore and the ruins of ancient forts and encampments which remain as a memorial to a virile fighting race whose history is written only on these stones.

However, I was concerned far more with the grim prospect of matriculation and the subsequent scholarship examination than with archaeological research, and had little time to explore the neighbourhood. Except for a daily walk,

generally in the pouring rain, which never seems to cease in the west of Ireland, such time as I did not spend in the examination hall was passed in my hotel bedroom, in a frantic endeavour to effect last-minute repairs to my knowledge of the classics, of the need of which I became increasingly aware as zero hour approached. However, the ordeal was over at last, and though fearing the worst, I gladly left Galway behind me and have never had the opportunity or even, let me admit it, the desire to visit it since. It will be readily understood my relief was great when a few days later I heard that all was well, and that I had managed to win one of the scholarships. This, of course, I had to surrender, as I was not remaining at Queen's College, but now, to my great satisfaction, the road to Oxford was clear.

Having selected that Univeristy as my *Alma Mater*, I expressed a further desire to go, if possible, to Christ Church, as I believed this to be, without knowing very much about it, the best and most famous of all the Oxford colleges.

At all events none other has had on its books such a succession of men who have distinguished themselves in every walk of life as statesmen, scholars, warriors and writers. In addition the "House" is surely the most magnificent of all the colleges of Oxford. Founded by Cardinal Wolsey, it was his plan to establish a college out of the revenues of the suppressed monasteries, larger and more richly endowed than any other in the world. But misfortunes overtook him before his work was completed. In one year he spent nearly £8,000, which would be equivalent to possibly £150,000 today; and his purpose was, as Foxe says:

"To gather into that College whatever excellent thing there was in the whole realm."

Three sides of the great quadrangle known as "Tom Quad" had arisen before Wolsey fell on adversity; and although the construction was subsequently carried through under the patronage of Henry VIII and the endowment completed, it was on a basis far less generous and lavish than Wolsey had planned. Even so, Christ Church easily surpasses all other colleges in the scale of its establishment. It is unique in having a double character, inasmuch as the cathedral of Oxford, which adjoins it, is the college chapel, and the Dean is not only head of the cathedral and chapter, but principal of the college as well.

To mark this connection with the cathedral, all undergraduates at the "House" wore surplices on Sundays and Saints' days. There were so many of these that one would have forgotten all about them if it had not been the practice for one's "scout" to murmur in dulcet tones when waking one:

"White chapel today, sir."

Undergraduates during their first and second years were required to do seven chapels a week—either on Sundays at the normal times or on weekdays at 8 a.m. This was at all events a useful method of getting them out of bed. I am afraid I have not been too regular a church-goer since leaving Oxford and can only hope that I accumulated whilst there a credit account on which I have certainly been drawing ever since.

For my first year I was allocated rooms in Peckwater quadrangle. When entering college as a freshman, the newcomer has to take whatever accommodation he is given. Although some rooms were much pleasanter than others, it was supposed to be entirely a matter of luck what one got. I have no doubt, however, that some discrimination was necessary, because it was custom-



[Soames, Oxford]

MISS LILY BRAYTON AND THE AUTHOR
AS KATHARINE AND PETRUCHIO IN "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"



THE OXFORD UNION SOCIETY—UNVEILING OF "ASQUITH" BUST
A GROUP OF EX-PRESIDENTS

(includes) The Archbishop of Canterbury (Lord Lang), Rt. Hon. Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Rt. Hon. Earl Beauchamp, Rt. Hon. Earl of Burkenhead, Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, H. I. P. Hallett, Maurice Woods, Philip Guedalla, Beverley Nichols, Goodman Roberts, M.P., and the Author.

ary for the new tenant to take over the furniture in his rooms from his predecessor at a valuation, and then in his turn resell it again on departing to other quarters. This meant very often putting down a substantial sum of money, which in the case of those who, like myself, were not too well endowed might be inconvenient. The furniture in my rooms, if I remember aright, had the low valuation of £25. In some cases where the rooms were larger and more elaborately equipped the sum involved was four or five times as much.

Although my apartment consisted of two small dark attic rooms with no outlook through the windows other than a low stone parapet, they gave me more personal satisfaction at the time than any place of residence has ever done since. Even the fact that the previous tenant had celebrated his departure by decorating the walls with crude charcoal designs of doubtful artistic value did not in the least lessen my pride and pleasure, and indeed merely gave me an excuse to have the rooms redecorated according to my own taste, which in those days was somewhat exotic. What did anything matter? Was I not now an Oxford man, released from the restraints of parental supervision and school routine, with three whole years before me in which I was free to play my part in the world of Oxford?

Very soon after I was settled in I received, as was usual, a "royal command" from the Dean, the Very Reverend Thomas Strong, D.D., inviting me to breakfast—surely the most ungodly meal at which to be entertained, even by a Dean. These breakfasts were, I am afraid, a painful ordeal for both host and guest. The "freshers" were invited in batches of four. We were all naturally somewhat overwhelmed by the occasion; but the Dean, who was a bachelor and therefore bereft of feminine assistance, was easily the most nervous person present. Although a man of wide scholarship and generous sympathies, and, after one got to know him, a very charming personality, he had little or no small-talk with which to put his guests at their ease; and therefore when we had discussed the weather and given him our immature impressions of Oxford and said that we took both milk and sugar in our tea, there were apt to be awkward and embarrassing periods of silence. Indeed the nature of these breakfasts was so well known that an amusing cartoon was published about that time depicting the Dean presiding at the tea-tray, and timidly saying to some nervous and embarrassed freshman, after a long silence: "Do you like your tea strong?"—an execrable pun on "T. Strong", his own name.

Another story told of Dr. Strong was that one day he came into the room and in an effort to be breezy, remarked, "Well, well, we have a little sun this morning," to which a nervous freshman, who knew nothing of his domestic circumstances, stammered in reply: "Indeed, sir? I hope Mrs. Strong is all right?"

Mention of Dr. Strong reminds me of a *faux pas* I very nearly committed many years later, when a Member of the House of Commons. It was in 1929, when a heated political controversy was raging in regard to the new and revised Prayer Book. Like other Members who had taken a prominent part in the discussions, I was inundated with correspondence, argumentative, abusive and approbatory, from all and sundry; and, as was only to be expected, many country clergymen were among my correspondents. In endeavouring to send a courteous acknowledgment of this epistolary bombardment I came across one letter written from a remote country parsonage, wherein the writer greeted me in the most friendly manner and referred familiarly to our association in

the old days at the "House". After setting forth his views on the burning issue of the Prayer Book, he ended by signing his letter "Yours most sincerely, T. Oxon." Not recalling anyone of that name and yet wishing to answer his letter in the same tone and spirit, I commenced my reply: "My dear Oxon", and it was only when I was halfway through and still puzzled as to the identity of the writer that fortunately it came to me in a flash that my correspondent must be none other than the Right Reverend Thomas Strong, D.D., then Lord Bishop of Oxford. I still shudder to think of the narrow escape I had of addressing a person of such eminence in so familiar and disrespectful a manner.

Throughout my Oxford career I had two absorbing interests: politics and the stage. For the one there was ample outlet in the Union and the College Debating Societies; for the other I endeavoured to find scope in the O.U.D.S. and the Olympian Dramatic Club.

This latter had something of a meteoric career. Founded by myself and a few friends, it made for a time quite a sensation. It was, of course, regarded as a somewhat impudent challenge to the old-established O.U.D.S., which by its charter was restricted to Shakespearean and Greek plays, and was the only undergraduate society entitled to give public performances in Oxford. We knew therefore that our activities would have to be confined to private entertainments in our own rooms, and that if we did give any public performances they must perforce be outside the confines of the University. However, that did not deter us in the least. Why should we wait or conceal our talents until discovered by the older society? Come what may, we were determined to get together and act. Let the authorities try to prevent us if they could! So we drafted a glowing circular inviting the co-operation of all afflicted with the dramatic urge, and the result was most encouraging. The *sine qua non* of membership was that every member must be prepared to act, recite, sing, play some musical instrument or contribute an item to the evening's entertainment, and must undergo an "audition" by the committee before election. We were not going to have any passengers in our new society. Anyone who desired to be numbered among the Olympians must be ready to pull his weight. The scheme was to produce one-act plays or a variety entertainment once a fortnight in the rooms of one of our members, and also once a term to stage a full-length play in some convenient theatre or hall outside the Oxford boundaries. Greatly ambitious, we also decided to offer a gold medal for the best original one-act play written by a member of the Club, to be judged by a well-known playwright.

I cannot remember, however, that this project materialized. One or two plays were sent in, but I fear none of them approached the gold standard; and in any event, as funds were low the promised gold medal might have been a little difficult to obtain. Nevertheless we were successful in discovering a good deal of talent in other directions; but, with the exception of Patric Curwen, now so well-known as a compère with the B.B.C., I am not aware that any of our members ever took to the stage professionally.

According to plan, therefore, we hired halls and "fit-up" theatres at Goring-on-Thames, Islip and other places in the vicinity of Oxford, where we gave performances to our own complete enjoyment and satisfaction.

On one occasion, with somewhat reckless audacity, considering the state of our exchequer, we engaged the County Theatre, Reading, for a whole week, and there presented Captain Robert Marshall's stirring comedy *The Second in*

Command. I regret to relate, however, that the general public of Reading did not show themselves as appreciative of our talents as we felt they deserved, partly because there was a terrific heat-wave at the time, and also because the theatre itself had not too good a name among the townsfolk. In the end, however, we were only £50 down, and the kick we got out of it was terrific and well worth the money.

Our leading lady was Miss Beatrice Forbes-Robertson, naturally a tower of strength, and the cast otherwise included Stefan Brichia, a young Austrian undergraduate, and one of the most brilliant, attractive and at the same time irresponsible persons I have ever met: I spent a small fortune in cab fares fetching him to rehearsals which he had completely forgotten about; Guy Rathbone, a Double Blue and real sportsman, who was killed in the war of 1914-18; Eric Gore-Browne (now Lieut.-Colonel War Office Staff, Deputy Chairman of the Southern Railway, etc., etc., see *Who's Who*); St. Leger Gosselin, the famous "Padre" of the 8th Army in North Africa; H. R. Herman-Hodge; Patrick Curwen; Eric Southam (Provost of Guildford) and myself.

The high spot in the history of the Olympians was when Mr. Beerbohm Tree brought his entire London company to Oxford, and gave a performance of *Hamlet* in the Town Hall under the auspices of the Club. That same evening he was the principal guest at our first annual dinner, when we also had the privilege of entertaining the Earl of Denbigh, Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., M.P., Sir Joseph Dimsdale (Lord Mayor of London), Mr. J. Comyns Carr, the author and playwright, Mr. W. L. Courtney, the famous dramatic critic, and other notabilities. All this made quite a splash, and for a time the O.U.D.S. had to take a back seat.

We even published a sixpenny magazine, *The Olympian*, of which only two numbers appeared, but nevertheless added something to the gaiety of the University. In the copies still in my possession there are original articles by Alfred Sutro and Jerome K. Jerome which it must have been something of a journalistic "scoop" to obtain.

After a short but eventful life of about two years the Olympian Dramatic Club suffered the fate of many similar undergraduate societies and passed peacefully away. We had all had a lot of fun out of it, but by that time several of its most prominent members, including the President, had joined the O.U.D.S., and one or two of us were on the committee of that Society. It was clear, therefore, that we could no longer take an active part in the management of a rival establishment, and in any event the O.U.D.S. offered far greater scope for our histrionic ambitions.

Unfortunately for me, the first annual production after my election was *The Clouds*, of Aristophanes, in the original Greek. Although cast for the important part of Pheidippides, it was soon apparent that my knowledge of the language was not up to the mark, and with mingled disappointment and relief I withdrew in favour of Compton Mackenzie, of Balliol, who not only gave an admirable performance, but has since provided many proofs of a deep and abiding interest in Greek thought and culture. The main burden of the play, however, rests on the shoulders of Strepsiades, and this was acted with a fine sense of comedy by my particular friend and future "best man", Bill Mercer, now so well known as a delightful novelist under the pseudonym of Dornford Yates.

It was not therefore until my third year at Oxford that I was afforded an opportunity of making my début with the O.U.D.S. This was in the famous production of *Measure for Measure*, which certainly made theatrical history. The choice was a bold one; for though not the least poetic and beautiful of Shakespeare's plays, the theme of *Measure for Measure* had long been considered so unsavoury as to render it quite unfit for popular presentation. Indeed the bare announcement of the forthcoming production was sufficient to elicit a violent protest from the residents of North Oxford and bring from them the threat of a boycott such as had greeted Miss Adelaide Neilson's production of the same play in London some forty years earlier. As a result, *Measure for Measure* had not been performed on any stage since that time.

The Society, however, refused to be intimidated, especially as an acting version had been prepared with the utmost skill and discretion by our producer, George R. Foss, who was a Shakespearean scholar second to none. When Mr. Oscar Asche and Miss Lily Brayton, emboldened by our enterprise, presented the same play at the Adelphi some months later they used the same acting edition.

As a result of all this agitation and the fact that we were producing a play which had not been performed within living memory, immense public interest was aroused, and there was scarcely an actor-manager of note or a leading dramatic critic who did not make the journey to Oxford to see it.

From an acting point of view *Measure for Measure* has much to commend it to a society such as the O.U.D.S. Apart from the opportunities it offers to the leading rôles, it has many good parts almost equally balanced in importance.

In addition to Angelo, for which I was cast, there is Vincentio, played by R. Gorell Barnes, of Balliol (now Lord Gorell and a distinguished poet); Claudio, played by F. C. Meyer, of New College (afterwards Sir Frank Meyer), a close friend and Parliamentary colleague; Lucio, played by W. J. C. Curwen, who was killed in the Great War of 1914-18; Abhorson, by Ivan Snell (now, like myself, a Metropolitan magistrate); and Elbow and Barnadine, by Lionel Gartside and J. L. Phillips, two of the best Shakespearean clowns I have ever seen on any stage. The only feminine rôle of importance, that of Isabella, was played with real emotional force by Miss Maud Hoffmann, a most competent actress who, for some reason, never attained the position on the professional stage to which her abilities entitled her.

The main psychological interest of the play revolves round the character of Angelo, who can be portrayed as a double-dyed villain and hypocrite, or as a man whose deeds had hitherto matched his high professions until he was caught in the toils of an overwhelming passion for the pure-souled nun, Isabella. It seemed to me that this latter reading was more consistent with what Shakespeare intended, as shown by the ending of the play, and that he never meant Angelo to lose entirely the sympathy of his audience.

We acted *Measure for Measure* for eight nights and two matinées, and achieved a considerable artistic success, largely owing to the brilliant and painstaking instruction of Foss.

As to my own share in it, the critics showed a gratifying and quite exceptional generosity. So much so that perhaps I may be excused for quoting a few brief extracts. For instance, Mr. William Archer, so well-known in Edwardian days as a dramatic critic and playwright, wrote in a now defunct London "daily", the *Tribune*:

In the acting of Mr. Rentoul there was really nothing of the amateur . . . the ease and dignity of his carriage, the intelligence of his phrasing, the finish of his diction and the discreet management of his voice were all admirable. His initial qualifications for the stage are unmistakable. He has all the surface gifts of a good actor. How deep his qualifications may go it would be rash to conjecture from this one performance of an unduly difficult part, but I was certainly much impressed.

Then there was the formidable Mr. A. B. Walkley of the *London Times*, who remarked that:

Mr. Rentoul of Christ Church entered into the part of Angelo with an emotional realism quite extraordinary for an amateur. This young man portrayed the curiously complex character with a force and skill which an experienced actor might have envied.

Mr. J. T. Grein followed suit in the *Sunday Times* by adding that "the outstanding feature was the Angelo of Mr. G. S. Rentoul. . . . If he takes up the stage as a profession he should go far."

The *Sporting and Dramatic News* wrote: "Mr. Rentoul's performance of Angelo was quite remarkable. It was a strangely powerful performance for so young a man and he should make a promising recruit to the professional stage", whilst the Varsity paper *Isis*, which was often inclined to be somewhat "superior" and scathing, was good enough to express its "belief that Mr. Rentoul has in him the makings of a great actor".

Without wearying my readers, the above comments taken at random from a great many will suffice to show that I had a very good Press.

Unfortunately, however, the boycott had its effect, and, to use a picturesque "Americanism", caused "chilblains in the Box Office". Indeed, so seriously were our coffers depleted that the following year something drastic had to be done. It was therefore a great triumph when we succeeded in persuading the brilliant and charming actress, Miss Lily Brayton, then at the height of her fame, to take part in a colourful and lighthearted version of *The Taming of the Shrew* in which she had already scored an immense success at the Adelphi.

This was the first time a "star" of the front rank had appeared in an "Ouds" show. It naturally proved an immense draw. It was my good fortune to be cast for Petruchio, and to have the privilege of "playing opposite" to one of the finest Shakespearean actresses of our time. We had "House Full" boards out every night, and the Club ended the week with a substantial balance. Again the critics were kind, Mr. Walkley declaring that "Mr. Rentoul has the making of a really good actor in him", whilst the *Bystander* added that I showed "a natural aptitude for the stage which lifts him far above the amateur plane". According to the *Oxford Chronicle*, "Mr. Rentoul's Petruchio is certain to be remembered as one of the finest individual achievements standing to the credit of the Society", and there were many other notices equally gratifying to the self-esteem of a young undergraduate.

The O.U.D.S., which was founded as long ago as 1884, has always had exceptional prestige among amateur dramatic societies. I believe this is largely attributable to the wisdom and foresight of the great Dr. Benjamin Jowett, who was Vice-Chancellor at the time, and granted the Society its first charter in spite of considerable academic opposition.

The drama was not exactly encouraged in those prim Victorian days, and "play-acting" by undergraduates was severely frowned upon by most univer-

sity authorities. This, of course, makes Jowett's action in formally recognizing the O.U.D.S. all the more noteworthy. Not only this, but what probably helped more than anything else to give the Society a dignity and status of its own were the two main conditions which Jowett laid down, and which until comparatively recent times were rigidly observed. These were:

(1) that Shakespeare or a Greek play were to be the only dramas permitted to the Society, and

(2) that the female rôles were to be played by women and not by men.

I realized how wise this latter proviso was—on the face of it the very opposite of what might have been expected—when on one or two occasions I went over to Cambridge to see performances by the "Footlights Club" and the A.D.C. I then came to the conclusion that for men to take the female rôles, as is the custom there, especially in modern plays, revues and musicals such as are permitted in the sister University, has in many instances a wholly demoralizing and undesirable effect on the individuals concerned. A visit I paid to the dressing-rooms of some of these female impersonators was to me a distinctly nauseating experience.

Jowett's other stipulation was equally wise, for there is not much doubt that Shakespeare provides the best possible scope for latent histrionic talent, and for the development of voice, deportment and gesture. If any proof of this were required, it can be found in the exceptional number of famous actors who made their first appearance on the boards under the banner of the O.U.D.S. For this reason I regret that in recent years the rule as to Shakespearean and Greek plays should have been relaxed, even in favour of such "classics" as Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* and Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. It is the thin end of the wedge, and likely to lead in time to the production of ephemeral modern plays, thereby depriving the O.U.D.S. of its special character and artistic status. However, one cannot speak very definitely about the future, for during the war the Society has, of course, ceased to function altogether, and it may be that to get it restarted will present even greater problems than after the last war, when its continued existence was for some time in considerable doubt; but it is to be hoped that coming generations of undergraduates will be inspired with a sufficient love of the drama to overcome these difficulties, and that all who have been associated with the activities of the Society in the past will do their best to lend a hand.

A more frivolous and lighthearted production of which I have a vivid recollection, but not, of course, to be mentioned in the same breath as those of the O.U.D.S., was a "scintillating" comedy drama entitled *Rejected Addresses*, presented by a College Society at the "House", known as "The Cardinals", behind closed doors. This precaution was necessary in case any of the victims—dons and others—of the author's somewhat scurrilous wit might obtain admission unawares. As, however, time softens all things, there is no harm in revealing that, according to the programme before me, the authors were T. G. Cochrane and W. A. Greene, better known today as Major the Hon. Thomas Cochrane, D.S.O., and the Right Hon. Lord Greene, Master of the Rolls. The chief characters were an anarchist, a burglar, the head-mistress of Flapperton House, a high-class seminary for young ladies, and a "heartless angel", by name Arabella Arbuthnot. The scenes included a dormitory of the said Flapperton House and the anarchist's torture chamber. The play can be better imagined than described, but it was highly topical and full of the most scandalous insinua-

tions against all and sundry. Needless to say, both performers and audience had a most hilarious evening.

Among my fellow Cardinals, in addition to those mentioned, were Neville Talbot, afterwards Bishop of Pretoria and one of the founders of "Toc H"; T. M. Mavrogordato, so well known in lawn tennis circles; the late Pat Munro, M.P.; the elegant Cleveland Stephens; Ivan Snell; and Geoffrey Moseley, a Master of the Supreme Court.

So much, then, for the drama, on which exigencies of space forbid me any longer to linger.

My political activities, as already stated, were centred in the Union, which any undergraduate could join on payment of a modest entrance fee and subscription.

The Oxford Union possesses an outstanding fame among the debating societies of the world, and to occupy its Presidential Chair is admittedly a high honour. Although its popularity may ebb and flow from one generation to another, and it may sometimes have suffered from the transitory competition of some college club, it has on the whole been successful ever since its foundation in attracting to its debates the best of undergraduate talent.

Doubtless the real explanation of its prestige is that no other society can claim among its ex-Presidents, officers and members so many men who have played a brilliant part in the history of their country, or so many who gave promise in their early days of the greatness to which they subsequently attained. The views expressed in their Oxford days may often have differed materially from those which they held in after life, but nevertheless the same qualities of rhetoric, humour and of judgment were often clearly discernible.

The Oxford Union came into existence in 1823, when there was a renewed interest in public questions, and a consequent demand for wider opportunities for discussion than could be afforded by any college society. It is satisfactory to know that once again the "House" led the way, and that the first meeting of the Oxford Union Society was held in "one of the low-browed rooms in Christ Church", on the summons of Donald Maclean, of Balliol, who was its first President and afterwards M.P. for the City of Oxford.

The Union, according to the rules, was established for the purpose of discussing any subject not immediately involving theological questions. For many years the Society had no fixed abode, and met in the rooms of its members; and the attempts which were subsequently made to obtain a permanent room led to a violent dispute with the University authorities. Indeed, original thought, especially on questions of current politics, was not exactly encouraged by the powers that be. The Society, however, with the audacity of youth, managed to secure a suitable room, and was able to meet there in defiance of the ban. The proctor, hearing of this, sent a messenger, who entered while Samuel Wilberforce, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, was addressing the assembly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the proctor desires that you should disperse and retire immediately—each to his own college."

To this demand the President, J. Wilson Patten, of Magdalen (afterwards Lord Winmarleigh), made a reply which is almost worthy to rank with that of Speaker Lenthall to Charles I.

"Sir," he said, "this house has received the proctor's message, and will send an answer to the summons by an officer of its own."

Perhaps as a result of this firm and dignified attitude the proctorial opposition was short-lived.

No later than 1829 the Society was installed in "Wyatt's Rooms" in High Street. An amusing drawing by Cuthbert Bede, the author of *Verdant Green*, of this room during a debate is in my possession.

These rooms continued to house the Society until 1857, when the financial position and membership had sufficiently improved for it to be able to purchase and adapt for its own occupation commodious premises elsewhere. These have now all the amenities of a West End club, and consist not only of the famous debating hall, but also of a dining-room, a newspaper and reading-room, billiard-room and lounges, and not least a splendid library, the ceiling of which is adorned with frescoes by some of the most famous artists of the pre-Raphaelite school.

In connection with these there is an interesting story with which I was personally concerned during my term of office as President. The paintings were of enormous artistic value—comprising as they did some of the best work of William Morris, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Valentine Prinsep, G. F. Watts and others. Unfortunately they had been painted on the thin plaster of the ceiling without the least scientific preparation. As a result the paintings had so scaled and faded that for more than a generation they had been almost invisible to the naked eye. Restoration was out of the question, for a mere breath upon the surface, whilst insufficient to blow away the cobwebs, was yet enough to make fragments of the paintings fall down in dust. There seemed nothing to be done until we heard of the remarkable success achieved in Italy in photographing damaged frescoes. Although the position and light were nothing like as favourable, we decided to make the experiment. In Mr. W. E. Gray we found one of the ablest of living photographers. The defects of light were overcome by the use of huge mirrors, and the result was altogether amazing. The sensitive photographic plates revealed the pictures in a way that no human eye had been able to see them for over forty years, and we were thus able to preserve a permanent record of a great artistic movement. It was naturally a satisfaction to me that this notable experiment should have been brought to a successful conclusion during my Presidency.

When I first began to attend the Union debates, the outstanding figures were: "Billy" Temple (now Archbishop of Canterbury), Herbert du Parc (now Lord Justice of Appeal), Alexander Shaw (now Lord Craigmyle and former Chairman of the P. & O.), Henry Lygon, Humphrey Paul, and Maurice Woods—probably the ablest of them all, who wrote a brilliant history of the Tory Party and whose early and tragic death ended what would undoubtedly have been a distinguished career.

The seating arrangements of the Union follow those in the House of Commons. Supporters of the motion before the House sit on the right of the President's chair, whilst the Opposition sit facing it. In front of the chair is the secretary's table, and on it, as in the House of Commons, are two brass-bound boxes. Those whose names are "on the paper", that is to say printed publicly in advance, are permitted to speak from the box from their own side of the table, with all the additional confidence which it gives to have something on which to rest one's notes and to grip or thump as occasion demands. In fact the boxes—both in the House of Commons and the Union—bear indentation marks said to have been made by Mr. Gladstone's signet ring as he banged his

fist upon them to emphasize some point, thus showing that his style of oratory, both in youth and age, was equally forcible.

When the House of Commons was destroyed in the blitz of 1941 these historic boxes perished in the holocaust, and the Union offered to present its own almost equally famous boxes in order to replace them. As a matter of fact they are of even greater antiquity, as they date back a hundred and eighteen years to the foundation of the Union in 1823. I myself heard six Prime Ministers speak at the Union from these boxes: Lord Rosebery, Lord Oxford and Asquith, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Lord Balfour, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill, as well as many other celebrities—Lord Curzon, the Right Hon. George Wyndham, Lord Birkenhead and Lord Simon.

But my most entertaining recollection of them is of a much more frivolous kind. It was during the Presidency of the brilliant Humphrey Paul in 1900. Henry Lygon, his friend and rival, discovered that the date in question was the President's birthday, so he secreted an immense birthday cake, complete with icing and candles, in one of the boxes, and during private business rose with mock solemnity to call the attention of the House to this epoch-making anniversary. Paul sat in the President's chair, highly self-conscious, but not knowing how to stem the tide of his tormentor's eloquence. At the end of his remarks Lygon at last flung open the lid of the box, extracted the cake and solemnly placed it in Paul's lap. Instead of rising to the occasion, as he might have done, and thanking the donor with equal solemnity—in which case all would have been well—Paul lost his temper and flung the cake off his knees with an angry gesture. It shattered and broke into a thousand pieces, and everyone sitting near was deluged with an avalanche of crumbs and fragments. It was, of course, an undignified, but highly diverting scene. I think, however, Paul never quite forgave Lygon for his audacity.

The Presidency of the Union is a much coveted honour; according to some, it is the best that Oxford has to offer. This no doubt is partly owing to the reflected glory accruing to any President from the eminence afterwards attained by so many of those who from time to time have occupied the chair.

For instance, among the Presidents of the Union who were at Oxford in my time were W. A. Temple, Herbert du Parcq, J. A. Brooke (afterwards Chairman of the Electricity Commission), Alexander Shaw, Henry Lygon, Humphrey Paul, Maurice Woods, Neville Talbot, H. I. P. Hallett, W. G. C. Gladstone (the first M.P. to be killed in the war of 1914-18), and Viscount Wolmer (formerly M.P. for Aldershot and now Earl of Selborne).

Not a bad list for one generation of Oxford men.

But apart from this, what makes the Presidency best worth having is that it happens to be the only position in an undergraduate's life dependent on a free secret ballot of members drawn from the whole University. No one, however brilliant in other ways, could ever hope for success who was unpopular with his fellow undergraduates, and the esteem of one's contemporaries in any walk of life is always precious.

Anything in the nature of canvassing is strictly forbidden, although the *esprit de corps* of one's own college can generally be relied upon for support. In addition the would-be President is expected to make a round of visits to the various college debating societies during the few weeks preceding his election, and much may depend upon whether he is able to make a good impression.

A new President is elected every term, but this does not mean that the chances of any particular aspirant are very great. To begin with, it is almost essential to have held one or two of the lesser offices before standing for the Presidency. It is therefore rare for anyone to be in the running before he has reached his third year, and, moreover, there is an unwritten rule that no one shall stand more than twice.

That being so, it will be readily understood with what personal pride and satisfaction I found myself occupying the Presidential chair for the first time on October 18th, 1906. It is true that I had no sooner taken my seat than, by some failure of the electric current, all the lights went out and the hall was plunged into a complete black-out, so that for the first few minutes of my Presidential term I was literally groping in the dark. However, this enabled me to use the time-honoured House of Commons formula, and order "candles" to be brought in. As a matter of fact the "technical hitch" was speedily remedied, and adequate illumination was soon available for the debate which followed. The subject matter is always selected by the President, and I had tabled—as a tribute to my Irish ancestry and to the prominent part my father had taken in the Home Rule controversy—the motion that: "In the opinion of this House the time is now ripe for some measure of Home Rule to be accorded to Ireland"; and as an additional attraction had invited W. G. C. Gladstone, the grandson of the famous protagonist of Home Rule, William Ewart Gladstone, to uphold the cause of Irish self-government. He was supported on that occasion by W. S. Armour, son of the famous Armour of Ballymony, and who later was for many years editor of the famous Irish newspaper the *Northern Whig*. However, in spite of their forceful advocacy, the House was not prepared to accept such a drastic solution of the Irish problem, and the motion was defeated by a majority of eleven.

It was customary for each President to invite some distinguished "stranger" to speak at a so-called "Visitors' Debate" held once a term, and I was fortunate enough to be able to persuade the Right Hon. George Wyndham, M.P., to pay us a visit.

Wyndham was an old Parliamentary colleague and friend of my father, and had been Chief Secretary for Ireland in Mr. Balfour's Government. I doubt whether there has ever been a more romantic, delightful and chivalrous personality in political life. In many of his physical and mental characteristics he might have been regarded as the prototype of Anthony Eden. His outward appearance harmonized perfectly with his spiritual temperament: his clustering iron-grey hair, dark luminous eyes, the graceful poise of his body, his courteous bearing and the pleasant aristocratic tones of his voice made an indelible impression upon all who met him. He looked, in fact, what he was: a soldier, a poet and a distinguished man of letters. Yet in some respects he struck one as a gay and swaggering troubadour—almost out of place in the times in which he lived. He spoke as one would expect—with eloquence, charm and fluency. His choice command of language gave to his arguments a polish and clarity like tempered steel, and he possessed in addition a delightful strain of humour. He was the sort of person one could not meet even once and forget. There was a time when he was regarded as the rising hope of the Conservative Party, and many prophecies were made as to his future. But, as so often happens, fate decided otherwise. For reasons which only did him credit—the chief of which was his unswerving loyalty to a friend and subordinate, who was thought to have committed some official blunder—he suffered eclipse when his star seemed

well in the ascendant. This was followed by a temporary retirement from active politics, and he died before he had regained his foothold. I had the privilege of entertaining him to dinner before the debate and again to breakfast in the morning, when he made an unforgettable impression on me and the few friends I had invited to meet him. His type is indeed a rare one.

On the occasion of his visit the motion was: "That, in the opinion of this House, the present (Liberal) Government is undeserving of the confidence of the country." It was moved by Neville Talbot, who succeeded me in the Presidential chair, and supported by G. B. Allen (afterwards Master of Pembroke). The case of the Government was championed by the Hon. A. H. Villiers and W. G. C. Gladstone. As is usual on these occasions, George Wyndham spoke fifth. By his greater experience, knowledge and eloquence, coupled with a natural inclination on the part of his audience to give support to the distinguished visitor whoever he might be, he was able to overwhelm his youthful opponents, and the motion was carried by a large majority.

I also persuaded Father Bernard Vaughan, whose dramatic and lurid sermons on the "Sins of Society" were the talk of London in those days, to come and speak at one of our debates. It was considered a daring innovation to invite a Jesuit priest to address the youthful intelligentsia of Oxford, and his visit aroused unusual interest. Although his somewhat flamboyant style did not quite fit in with the traditions of the Union, and he had to face a good deal of lighthearted opposition, he took it all with the utmost good humour and left behind him the impression of a sincere and forceful personality.

As a postscript to these memories I might mention an interesting and informal dinner at the House of Commons in 1932 attended by all the ex-Presidents of the Oxford Union who were at that time Members of Parliament. A menu card in my possession records the signatures of those present:

F. KINGSLEY GRIFFITH
A. BOYD-CARPENTER
J. F. W. GALBRAITH
HUGH MOLSON
JOHN BUCHAN
J. SCRYMGEOUR-WEDDERBURN
JOHN SIMON
ARTHUR STEEL-MAITLAND
DINGLE FOOT
LESLIE HORE-BELISHA
GERVAIS RENTOUL

These names, which it will be noted include a Lord Chancellor, a Governor-General of Canada, three Cabinet Ministers, two Members of the Government, two County Court judges and a Metropolitan magistrate, are some indication that the Oxford Union still continues to play its part in public life and to maintain the old traditions.

Looking back on my three and a half years at Oxford, I have no doubt that in many ways they were the happiest and most carefree of my life, however little I may have realized it at the time. I made many friends and gained a certain amount of personal success and prestige, and ever since have been able to cherish many pleasant memories. But, for anyone like myself, who had to rely entirely on his own efforts in order to earn a livelihood, I have often wondered whether the education provided was sufficiently vocational and

practical in its scope, and whether, from a purely material point of view, those years might not have been spent more profitably—although certainly not more pleasantly—in other ways.

It is difficult to say what really constitutes the best type of education, and what it is that education actually means. There is no hard and fast rule, no fixed standards by which it can be judged. What is a good education for one person may be the very reverse for another. The purpose of education—as I see it—is to instil knowledge and develop the mental powers, whether large or small, to such an extent as will enable the owners of them to make the best use of those powers in whatever sphere of life they happen to be placed. There are some who say that if everyone had the same opportunity everyone would be equally well educated. This seems to me absurd. As Lord Hewart remarked once: "It is foolish to regard education as so much petrol, which, if applied to any specified type of engine, will give a uniform measure of H.P."

Education affects not merely those who give, but also those who receive. It does not produce equality, very often quite the reverse. It brings to light inequalities which otherwise might not be apparent; you cannot get a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

What we have therefore to try and ensure is that the education we bestow is of the right kind and that the right things are taught in the right way, so as to fit those who receive the education for their work in after-life. I am inclined to think there is a tendency—both in public schools and at the universities—to be too academic and unpractical; at least, there certainly was in my time. There is too much standardization, particularly with regard to the exaggerated importance attached to the dead languages and the classics, whereby education tends to run in a groove.

An ability to pass examinations is no sure proof of education. Some of the dullest men intellectually have been the most successful in gaining academic distinctions, whilst other men of proved ability in after-life—Stanley Baldwin and Winston Churchill are two instances that spring to the mind—had entirely undistinguished scholastic careers. Perhaps the main value of examinations is to teach young people to work hard and concentrate on what they are doing.

I once heard a shrewd man of the world say that if he had a son he would take him from school at the age of fifteen or thereabouts and put him in a commercial house. This would wake him up and make a man of him. It would teach him to deal with men as men; to write a straightforward business letter; to manage his own money and gain some respect for those industrial methods which control the world. Next he would let him have a year in some more remote part of the world, where, under primitive conditions, people have formed their own rough codes of society. The next year or two should be spent in France or Germany, learning the languages, getting rid of prejudices of race and feeling, and acquiring the outward form of a European citizen. Then, and not till then, would he let him go to the University; because then, with his wits sharpened and some knowledge of life, he would be capable of enjoying its real advantages, attending the lectures with profit, acquiring manners instead of mannerisms and a University tone instead of a University taint. In all this there seems to me a good deal of hard common sense.

I certainly cannot say that I came down from Oxford particularly well fitted for the life that lay in front of me. On the other hand, I would not have for-

gone the experience of a 'Varsity career for anything. If I had done so I might have missed it even more than I am able to realize, and in particular I might have felt myself handicapped by the lack of that social self-confidence which a 'Varsity education does so much to afford.

As to this, however, it is difficult to speak with certainty; at all events they were good years I spent at Oxford, and, as I say, I would not have missed them for the world.

I have often visited Oxford since my undergraduate days, but it has always been with somewhat mixed feelings. There is the nostalgia which every Oxford man must feel for a place so imbued with the spirit and memories of his youth; but all the same, on going back, one feels considerably out of it; one is re-visiting as a stranger and an outsider a place of which one was once a part. In the present undergraduates one seems merely to recognize some of the ghosts of the past.

I wandered down the "Broad" and up the "High",
As I was wont in far-off days to do.
When lol debouching from the "Corn" there came two
Resplendent youths, who sauntering idly by
Gazed on my form with supercilious eye;
Whose glance said very plainly: "Who are you
That dare obtrude yourself upon our view?
The place is ours, for we have bought it. Fly!"
I realized that I was on the shelf
In that brief moment; saddened and forlorn
I paused irresolute upon my way.
Then, thinking that a dog soon has his day,
Strode on because I sadly found myself
Standing (like Ruth) amid the alien "Corn".

CHAPTER III

THE BAR

Many are 'called', but few are chosen."

In April 1907 I was called to the Bar by the Ancient and Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, the smallest but most sociably inclined of the four Inns of Court. My father, although himself a member of the Inner Temple, thought it best for me to go to Gray's Inn, since it seemed to have about it more of a collegiate atmosphere than the three larger Inns; and also the chances of becoming a Benchers at a reasonably early date were greater than in any of the rival establishments.

As, however, I was appointed a Metropolitan magistrate before my turn came to be raised to the Bench of Gray's Inn, it is not likely now that I shall attain that distinction, owing to the prejudice in favour of confining it to practising members of the Bar. The whole position is, however, anomalous, as three of my colleagues and several County Court judges are Benchers, merely because they happened to attain that dignity shortly before they were appointed to their present judicial positions. Why a barrister should be regarded as ineligible to join the governing body of his Inn of Court because he receives a judicial appointment at a somewhat earlier date than certain of his contem-

poraries is a thing I have never been able to understand. To be a Bencher of his Inn is an honour that every barrister naturally appreciates.

I also joined the Middle Temple as an associate member. Unfortunately Gray's Inn was too far away from the Courts to use the library for looking up some point of law in a hurry, or to lunch in Hall during the brief midday adjournment if "part heard".

For many years, therefore, I lunched in the Middle Temple, at the same table and generally with the same companions. Among them were Holman Gregory (afterwards Recorder of London), Cecil Whiteley (the late Common Serjeant), Artemus Jones (later a County Court judge), Alexander Neilson, Stuart Bevan—both "silks" with big practices, the latter being for some years a colleague of mine in the House of Commons—Stafford Cripps, formerly one of the legal luminaries and stormy petrels of the Labour Party, but now—strangely enough—one of the most popular figures in our national life, and one who may yet hold the highest position in the State; Ralph Thomas (now a judge in my father's old Court of the City of London); Jack Carr, a particularly charming person whose premature death put an end to a legal career full of promise; Hunter Gray, K.C.; Tindal Atkinson (the present Director of Public Prosecutions); J. B. Matthews, K.C., and Theobald Mathew, most delightful of men and wittiest of companions.

At these lunches the talk was mostly shop; but then there is nothing more interesting to those who are engaged in the same profession or occupation and have the same interests, at all events there was a flow of wit and repartee which would be difficult to beat.

I have often wondered whether the Bar would have been my own choice if left to decide for myself. While it is an honourable and in many respects a fascinating profession, it is at the same time one of the most precarious. It demands, moreover, special qualifications of temperament and spirit, which I doubt whether I possess, coupled with a single-minded devotion that can be highly exacting. On the other hand, it offers many prizes to the successful man. He has before him the most dazzling prospects of rank and distinction; but nothing will enable him to attain these heights except long laborious days and curtailed nights. For this reason the Bar has been wittily described as "a bed of roses": all bed and no roses during the early dreary days of waiting, and later, for the successful man, all roses and no bed!

In spite of Lord Esher's dictum that what a young barrister needs most to spur him on is to feel a wife and children tugging at his gown, I believe myself it is a big mistake for anyone in needy circumstances to go to the Bar. The strain during the early years of waiting is apt to be too great.

Many eminent men have from time to time given their opinions as to what makes for success at the Bar, but the young barrister who attempted to follow their admirable and contradictory advice would have a difficult task. Probably there is a good deal of practical wisdom in W. S. Gilbert's cynical suggestion about marrying a "rich attorney's elderly ugly daughter".

At all events, it is impossible to guarantee success; and the qualifications are not those popularly supposed: brains, ability, academic distinction have by themselves often proved insufficient. Eloquence is largely discounted; assurance is likely to meet with snubs. Rather would I suggest that success lies in a knowledge of the rules of practice, in an instinct for sizing up quickly any situation that may arise; in a faculty for ready thought, a capacity for hard

work, an attention to detail and a willingness to face drudgery; while last, but most important of all, is an acquaintance with as large a number as possible of those in the so-called "lower branch" of the profession, who are willing to back their fancy and give a young barrister his chance.

The competition is, of course, tremendous, as there are approximately five thousand names in the current Law List. No doubt many of these are not now practising; but probably most of them started with high hopes and a vision of forensic triumphs. To sum up, then, I should say it is certainly hazardous for any man to go to the Bar unless he has a strong constitution and vigorous physique, an independent income, and definite professional backing, together with a liking for the law, determination and plenty of patience. And even given all these personal attributes, he must be prepared to devote his whole thoughts and energies to this one objective. The Bar has been well described as "a jealous mistress who will brook no rivals". As I learnt from experience, it is highly prejudicial, and may sometimes be fatal, for a young barrister to have his name publicly associated with any outside activities—political, sporting or social—not connected directly with his professional work.

I commenced my professional career as a pupil of Henry Martley Giveen, one of the finest lawyers of his generation and most acute intellects at the Bar. At Oxford he had a brilliant scholastic record, and belonged to that select coterie of eminent men who emerged from the small college of Wadham in the 'nineties and included such outstanding personalities as F. E. Smith, John Allsebrook Simon, Adair Roche and C. B. Fry.

When I first went to "read" with him, Giveen had an extensive High Court practice, but still did not disdain a frequent visit to the County Court. Later on he was appointed Junior Counsel to the Treasury, which is understood to carry with it the reversion of a High Court judgeship; but overwhelmed by a poignant domestic affliction and tormented by ill-health, he was obliged after a few years to resign the appointment, and died in the full flood of a brilliant career. There was no man at the Bar who could grasp with more lightning speed the essential points of a case or was more painstaking or conscientious in his work. Incidentally, there was no man who was more neglectful of his personal health and comfort. Frequently it would be five or six o'clock in the afternoon before he would give a thought to lunch, and then he would rush out to the nearest A.B.C. for a cup of tea and a poached egg. In spite of being a heavy smoker he was a bundle of nerves, and on that account not the easiest man to work with. He certainly did not suffer fools gladly, and was inclined to be somewhat impatient with those whose minds were not as alert as his own. At the same time he was sympathetic and kind in his more genial moments and generally popular among those with whom he came in contact. In his meticulous insistence on forms and technicalities he belonged to the old school. It was seldom that any of his pupils could draft a pleading that would pass muster in his eyes; it usually happened that, after being subjected to the most scathing comments, the unfortunate draft would be impatiently consigned to the waste-paper basket and Giveen would rewrite the whole thing himself. Typewriting was to him an abhorrence, and he always insisted on every document going out of his chambers neatly and carefully written in longhand. His idea was that this in itself constituted some guarantee to the client that the matter in question had been fully and carefully considered. As, however, his own handwriting was often quite illegible, it is possible the recipient might

have preferred a mechanical reproduction. To have been with Givcen was a liberal education, and I certainly learnt a great deal from my year in his chambers.

[:] My first chambers on my own were at No. 4 Essex Court, Temple, where I shared a small back room with a most "learned" friend, Wilfred Barton, now a distinguished K.C. Barton was an Australian, and the son of Sir Edmund Barton, the Chief Justice. He had swept the board at the Bar examinations and won several legal scholarships as well. But all the scholastic distinction in the world does not necessarily lessen the period of waiting, or of itself ensure a single brief. Through the influence of his father, however, he occasionally received a junior brief in an Australian appeal to the Privy Council, which brought a certain amount of grist to the mill. Otherwise he and I went through the experiences of countless other young briefless barristers. We turned up at the Temple every morning about 10 a.m., well knowing there would be nothing to do, but hoping for the best. We would then don our wigs and gowns and saunter round the Courts, deriving as much entertainment as we could from listening to a *cause célèbre* or observing the idiosyncrasies of some well-known judge, and meanwhile trying to pick up a few hints from the methods and technique of some famous counsel. Occasionally we might be asked by one of these to take a note or "devil" some small application or other matter. The rest of the day would be spent uneventfully in discussing or noting for future reference some point of law or procedure, or reading the briefs of other more fortunate or busier men who occupied the same set of chambers.

As a newly fledged barrister in a very white wig, I listened enthralled to many absorbing dramas. Particularly do I remember some of the historic contests between Carson and Rufus Isaacs, when they were both at the height of their fame. They were generally matched against each other, and their forensic battles aroused an amount of public interest and excitement only equalled by great sporting events. This was due in part to the supreme positions occupied by the pair at the Bar, and partly to the qualities of their advocacy. Although each of them differed in personality and temperament, they had equipment not wholly dissimilar. Both were supreme masters of the art of cross-examination, and they were equally lucid in exposition and argument. There were, however, real differences. Carson had a native wit which Isaacs could not rival, and this, coupled with a striking physique and delightful Irish brogue and powers of scathing invective and satire, put him in a class by himself. Isaacs was equally shrewd and forceful, combining a faculty for memorizing intricate facts and figures with a tactical brilliance in the conduct of a case such as no advocate has ever excelled or possibly equalled. Where Carson was dominating and masterful, Isaacs was suave and courteous; where Carson thundered and stormed, Isaacs insisted and suggested; and both occupied a position at the Bar and in popular esteem incomparably greater than that of any "leader" today.

The cases in which they were engaged certainly possessed more "human" interest and were followed with far greater public attention than happens nowadays. This may have been partly due to the Press, which can no longer afford the space to report these forensic contests at the same length; and also that in the Divorce Court, which provided some of the tensest emotional dramas, such reports are now prohibited by law.



Judge Rentoul, K.C.

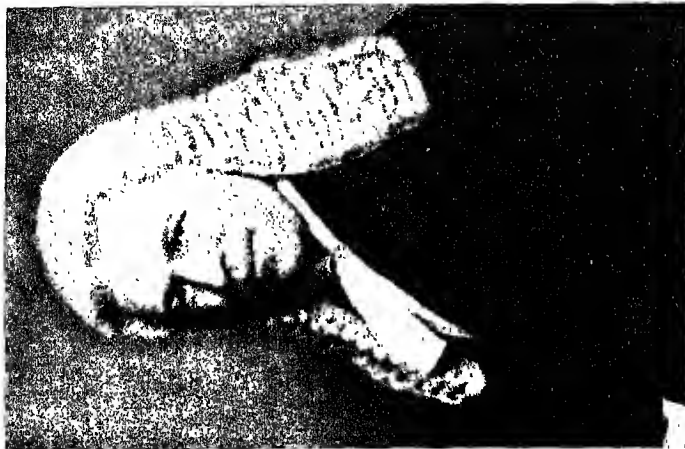
Sir John Pound, Bart.
(ex-Lord Mayor)

Sir William Dunn
(Sheriff)

LAST CASE TRIED IN OLD CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT, OLD BAILEY, LONDON

REX V. SPEAR
TUESDAY, 5TH OF MARCH, 1907

Hung in Royal Academy.



"SILK"



"JUST CALLED"



"COMING EVENTS"

The incomes earned by these men were phenomenal, and it is doubtful whether any similar fortunes will ever be made at the Bar again. I remember one case, for instance, "*Wylar v. Lewis*", in which both Carson and Isaacs received a fee of one thousand guineas on their briefs; and it was said that in addition there was a daily "refresher" to each of them of 250 guineas. The trial lasted thirty-three days in the King's Bench Division, and another eighteen days in the Court of Appeal, so that the two leaders each received ten to twelve thousand guineas for just that one case. Yet it was not a matter of any popular interest; the dispute was a purely commercial one between two groups of financiers concerning certain concessions in Portuguese East Africa, and, largely owing to Isaacs' financial knowledge and skill in the presentation of figures, the jury awarded the plaintiffs the sum of £65,000 damages. Carson, however, took the matter to the Court of Appeal, where the decision was ultimately reversed, in spite of a speech by Isaacs lasting nine days: the longest ever addressed to that tribunal.

I doubt whether any of the parties concerned considered it a satisfactory piece of litigation; it is probable that they all emerged sadder, wiser and (certainly) poorer men. However, I was naturally thrilled to see what glittering prospects of wealth and fortune were thus presented to the legal profession.

Then there was F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead), in many respects the most remarkable man of my time—both at the Bar and in politics, and, next to Edward Carson, the most spectacular advocate. His career was full of romance and fascination. I was present in Court throughout several of his most famous cases and had ample opportunity to admire and appreciate his forensic gifts. I also met him privately on several occasions, and found him a genial and entertaining, if somewhat overwhelming, personality. Many stories have been told of his brilliant rhetorical and forensic abilities, the most remarkable being his merciless wit and sarcasm, although he could be one of the most conciliatory of men when he chose. Some of the best stories about him are preserved in the interesting *Life* written by his son. There was, for instance, the historic exchange of "courtesies" with Judge Willis, a garrulous but kindly soul, who incidentally proposed my father for call to the Bar. This has been frequently told before, but is good enough to bear repetition.

The case in question was one in which F.E. had been briefed for an omnibus company which was being sued for personal injuries to a small boy who had been run over. It was suggested that, as a result of the accident, blindness had ensued. The judge's sympathies were immediately aroused. "Poor boy," he remarked, "poor boy. Blind. Put him on a chair so that the jury can see him."

Of course this demonstration of sympathy from the Bench was highly prejudicial to the defendants' case, and Smith interposed sarcastically:

"Perhaps your Honour would like to have the boy passed round the jury box?"

"That is a most improper remark," retorted the judge angrily.

"It was provoked," replied Smith, "by a most improper suggestion." Then there was a pause; after which the judge said:

"Mr. Smith, have you ever heard of a saying by Bacon—the great Bacon—that youth and discretion are ill-wedded companions?"

"Yes," came the lightning reply, "I have; and have *you* ever heard of a saying by Bacon—the great Bacon—that a much-talking judge is an ill-tuned cymbal?"

This not unnaturally infuriated Willis, who exploded:

"You are extremely offensive, young man." But the irrepressible F.E. again got the last word:

"As a matter of fact we both are, and the only difference between us is that I am trying to be and you cannot help it."

On another occasion the same judge, when some argument arose regarding a point of procedure, asked:

"What do you suppose I am on the Bench for, Mr. Smith?"

"It is not for me," replied F.E. suavely, "to attempt to fathom the inscrutable workings of Providence."

These same qualities of invective and repartee also distinguished F.E. as a platform speaker. I heard him many times address large political audiences, and marvelled at his powers. I remember a great mass meeting at Norwich, when for over an hour, without a note, without a gesture, and with scarcely an alteration of tone, F.E. held the audience spellbound. A few reckless souls attempted to interrupt the flow of his oratory, and soon regretted their temerity. There was a man who was wearing a cloth cap, and insisted on making himself something of a nuisance by repeatedly calling out, "Liar." F.E. suddenly stopped and said: "If the gentleman who keeps on interrupting me will only give his name instead of his profession, I am sure we shall all be glad to make his acquaintance." The "voice" was silent for the rest of the evening.

For all-round brilliance the career of F. E. Smith, both as a lawyer and a politician, has seldom been surpassed, or equalled. From comparatively humble beginnings, without money or influence, he swept on throughout his life from triumph to triumph.

His success at the Bar, both as a "local" at Liverpool and later in London, was tremendous, and for many years he made an enormous income, which he recklessly overspent. It was clear, however, that he was always more interested in politics than the law. When he made his famous maiden speech I was still an undergraduate at Oxford, and the whole University was ringing with its dazzling success. I have since been told by many Members of Parliament who heard it that they will always remember the occasion as one of the greatest thrills of their lives. And like everything else F.E. did, it appeared to have been made without effort, and was delivered with complete nonchalance almost amounting to disdain. This was probably something of a pose, for F.E. always liked to maintain the façade of a *flâneur* and *dilettante*. Even at Oxford, where he swept the board of academic distinctions, he deliberately gave the impression of doing little or no work, but the explanation was that he studied very hard at night and trained himself to need very little sleep, whilst his brilliant brain and immense power of concentration did the rest.

And so it was with his practice at the Bar: even when it was at its heaviest he still managed to fit in a day's hunting, week-end visits to friends in the country and every kind of social engagement, and yet appear in Court the next morning with a full mastery of his brief. He was not only a magnificent advocate but a profound lawyer. When he became Lord Chancellor, the criticism was that he knew no law and altogether lacked the sense of dignity which should appertain to such a position. Yet some of the judgments he gave in the House of Lords are historic, and could only have emanated from a first-class legal brain, whilst it is generally admitted that on the Woolsack he was a dignified

and impressive figure whatever his behaviour might have been like at other times. It is, of course, an open secret that he quaffed the cup of life to the full, and often put a greater strain upon himself than even his splendid physique and brilliant intellect could sustain. No man, however, could more truly say:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night
But oh, my foes, and ah! my friends,
It gives a lovely light!

Moreover, no one can deny that, whatever his faults, he was a man with a superb gift for friendship. His affection for his brother Harold—whom I knew well at Gray's Inn, and whose tragic and premature death was such a grief to all his friends—afforded touching proof that behind a somewhat cynical manner there beat a very warm heart. For a man who could be so loyal to his friends, and who never bore malice for long towards his enemies, much may be forgiven.

An outstanding rival and contemporary of F.E. throughout his life was John Simon. In many respects their careers ran on parallel and, to some extent, complementary lines. They were together at Oxford, and both graduated from the small college of Wadham; both had brilliant scholastic careers and successively occupied the Presidential chair of the Union; both achieved an immediate and outstanding position at the Bar, and both took silk in the shortest possible period of time. Both entered Parliament, and became law officers of the Crown at an exceptionally early age; both played a notable part in Indian affairs, and both ultimately became Lord Chancellor.

But, on the other hand, no two men were ever more different in temperament and character. Throughout his political career Simon was essentially the lawyer, which F.E. never was; and the lawyer is seldom a popular figure outside the Law Courts. In the House of Commons, no matter how brilliantly Simon might argue in favour of some particular policy, it was often difficult to escape the feeling that he was speaking from a brief, and that if he chose could make out almost as good a case on the other side. As a result, although his dialectical skill evoked admiration and applause, it seldom aroused enthusiasm or won for the speaker the affectionate regard of his audience.

Although he, like F.E., seems to have preferred politics to law, it cannot be said that his political success was anything like as great as it was in the forensic sphere, where his lucidity and power of compressing the most complicated case into a few simple and apparently indisputable facts was altogether remarkable.

Indeed, as Foreign Secretary, he came as near to failure as would be possible for anyone of his outstanding talents. It will be for history to decide how far his lack of foresight and lawyer-like mentality contributed to the disastrous situation in the years before the war.

It is sometimes forgotten that the first nail in the coffin of the League of Nations was the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. If a firm stand had been taken at that time, it is quite possible that the whole history of the world might have been changed, and the subsequent blood-bath of humanity avoided. But for some unexplained reason Simon took it upon himself to argue the Japanese case with such forensic skill that the Japanese delegate, the notorious Matsuoka, afterwards remarked to his friends that Simon had said in fifteen minutes what he himself had been trying to express for weeks!

In passing, I should like to recall the name of another barrister-politician,

who might well have had a career of equal brilliance. This was Terence O'Connor, a contemporary, and for many years a close friend of mine, both at the Bar and in politics, who, in 1936, became Solicitor-General in the National Government, and whose death at the tragically early age of forty-nine caused deep sorrow to all who knew him.

Terence was in many respects a typical Irishman, with all the qualities and defects of that brilliant race. His ability was undeniable, and he possessed also in full measure courage, initiative, wit, and charm of personality. Like F. E. Smith, he lived his life to the full, whether at Oxford, the Bar, in the hunting-field or in Parliament.

It is, however, a curious fact that although in every House of Commons, including the present one, there have been many famous barristers, some of whom have rendered distinguished public service, of very few can it be said that they were really "popular" figures in that critical assembly.

Perhaps the reason may be that although lawyers are recognized as a necessity in any civilized community, and one is forced, owing to the complexity of the law, to rely on their advice and assistance, most people are convinced that on the whole they are subtle dangerous fellows, ever prepared, if you pay their exorbitant fees, to paint black as white and white as black, and tear from you the innermost secrets of your soul!

For fees to any form they'll mould a cause,
The worst has merits, and the best has flaws.
Five guineas make a criminal to-day,
And ten to-morrow wipe the stain away.

So runs the popular rhyme, and possibly it helps to explain why no practising barrister has ever been a great national hero, or attained any marked degree of personal popularity comparable with those in other walks of life.

Then again, lawyers suffer from the disadvantage of belonging to that sinister class of persons who are supposed to possess the "gift of the gab", and there is nothing of which the average Englishman is more suspicious!

To quote Lord Baldwin: "If there is one thing more than another which those who have been in any other profession than the Bar, distrust more than another, it is the eloquent man. In the business world, other things being equal, the man who has the power of talking is not the man who gets promotion. To be able to express one's self in business is to be written down as not quite first class."

Whether one agrees with this dictum or not, nothing is more remarkable than the complete failure in the parliamentary arena of so many of the most brilliant members of the Bar. Perhaps too much is expected of them, and in any event the House of Commons is always inclined to be jealous of an outside reputation.

I well remember a very famous advocate confessing to me before making his "maiden" speech, that in spite of his long forensic experience, he had never felt so horribly nervous in his life. "If I do well," he said, "it will merely be described as a smart lawyer's speech, and if I fail it will be said these damned lawyers are never any use anywhere else than in the Courts."

But perhaps a stronger reason for the unpopularity of lawyers as a class is that they are so often made scapegoats of the law, particularly for its alleged uncertainty, costliness and delays. Yet for these the unfortunate lawyer is no more responsible than is the chemist for every patent medicine he happens

to have in his shop. However, I am digressing. *Revenons à nos moutons.*

Other outstanding personalities at the Bar in my day were R. A. Wright, Ernest Pollock, John Sankey, Marshall Hall, Stuart Bevan, J. B. Matthews, Douglas Hogg, Holman Gregory, Ellis Hume-Williams and Ernest Wild, to all of whom I had the privilege of referring from time to time as "my learned leader"; whilst, in addition to these, there were the fashionable "silks" of more recent vintage, such as Norman Birkett, Patrick Hastings and William Jowitt.

Birkett is now a judge, a position for which his temperament and abilities so admirably fit him. When at the Bar, the keynote of his advocacy was persuasiveness; he did not storm or browbeat, and certainly did not possess the dominant personality of a Charles Russell, a Carson, or even an Isaacs; although as an advocate it was with the last named that he seemed to have the most affinity. His voice was one of his greatest assets, and he played on it with skill. Musical and perfectly modulated, it was perhaps better adapted for a cathedral choir than for a court of law. It suggested, however, a sympathetic nature, and, coupled with a meticulous precision of language, made a pleasing impression on discerning ears.

He was always a pleasant and courteous opponent, and his success at the Bar was largely won by his simple and straightforward manner and his capacity for wooing both juries and witnesses. Having now been elevated to the Bench, there is not the same opportunity of hearing him; but some little time ago the general public was able to judge of his methods of appeal when he broadcast a series of "talks" on current events under the thinly veiled pseudonym of "Onlooker".

Birkett was a colleague of mine in the House of Commons for some years; but, like so many eminent lawyers, he was not a conspicuous success, although he spoke once or twice with sincerity and conviction on behalf of the underdog. However, the claims of his professional work never permitted him to take politics seriously, and he wisely realized that it is practically impossible to combine a forensic with a parliamentary career. Like his great rival, William Jowitt, he was never the traditional lawyer in appearance or manner; he reminded one more of the Civil Service as he gazed benevolently through his gold-rimmed spectacles and discussed his cases in quiet pleasant tones.

Jowitt was a highly persuasive advocate of much the same type. His handsome features and graceful figure suggest the artist and *dilettante* rather than the lawyer, and when appearing in Court there was nothing particularly forceful in his voice or appearance, nor did he ever quite succeed—either at the Bar or in politics—in giving an impression of burning faith in or zeal for the causes he was espousing. But until he gave up the Bar for politics his success was undoubtedly great, largely owing to his pleasant manner and lucidity of exposition.

Patrick Hastings, on the other hand, is an altogether different type. A brilliant advocate, his quickness of mind is extraordinary, and there is no counsel at the Bar who has not found him a formidable opponent. A brilliant, if at times a somewhat ruthless, cross-examiner, he certainly does not spare his victims; and at times even opposing counsel have not altogether escaped.

Hastings was Attorney-General in the first Socialist Government, having quite sincerely for a number of years had strong Labour sympathies, although never an ardent politician. But he was badly let down by his own Party in the events that led up to the utter rout of Labour in the election of 1924—so much so that he gave up political life in disgust, and has never taken any part in it since. As chief law officer of the Government, he had authorized the prose-

cution of a notorious Communist, John Ross Campbell, editor of the *Workers' Weekly*, who had written for his paper a revolutionary article addressed to the armed forces and alleged to be an incitement to mutiny. Some of Labour's Left Wing Members, however, were alarmed by the intended prosecution. They felt that such a charge was striking too near home, and that if this prosecution were to succeed they themselves might well be the next victims. Consequently James Maxton and some of his friends and associates made a vigorous protest to the Prime Minister (Ramsay MacDonald), who weakly agreed to the withdrawal of the charge. This was not only gross interference by the Executive with the course of justice, but a serious slur on the Attorney-General, on whose authority the prosecution had been launched. It was, moreover, more than Mr. Asquith and the Liberal Party—who up to that time had been observing towards the Socialists a benevolent neutrality—were prepared to swallow, and, on a vote of censure, they marched into the same lobby as the Conservatives, and the first Labour Government came to a not unexpected end.

But, so far as Patrick Hastings was concerned, it has not mattered much, although I know he felt it deeply at the time. He returned, probably with some relief, to private practice at the Bar, where he holds an outstanding position, and is doubtless making a far larger income than he could ever have hoped to earn in political life.

In my early days, like so many young barristers, I gained a good deal of useful experience at the Old Bailey and at the London and Middlesex Sessions.

One of the most curious features of the criminal Bar is the system known as "soup", whereby at the Central Criminal Court and County Sessions a certain number of minor briefs for the prosecution, paid for out of public funds, are distributed to members of the Bar Mess in rotation; and there was no more tragic sight than to note the look of disappointment on the faces of some of those whose names did not happen to be reached, and to whom the hoped-for guinea or two evidently meant so much—perhaps the certainty of a square meal. Yet many of these started with high hopes of a distinguished forensic career, and possibly even with visions of the Woolsack. To the younger men "soup" merely meant an opportunity of gaining experience in their profession, and very valuable it was. The first time I obtained a brief from this source the case was tried before my father, who was the Commissioner at the Old Bailey; so that I made my début under the parental eye.

Incidentally, my father happened to try the very last case in the famous Number One Court of the historic Sessions House in Old Bailey, before it was pulled down, together with the sinister Newgate prison adjoining, to make way for the present magnificent building. It was this Court that had seen the trial of Jack Sheppard, Jonathan Wild, Charles Peace and so many notorious malefactors of the past. A sketch of this historic occasion, of which the original is in my possession, was made by a well-known artist, J. D. Macpherson, and appropriately "hung" in the Royal Academy.

Among the leaders of the criminal Bar in my early days were Charles Mathews, Richard Muir, Archibald Bodkin, Travers Humphreys and W. H. Leycester. All of these were "Treasury" counsel and appeared mostly for the prosecution, whilst prominent among those usually briefed for the defence were Marshall Hall, Charles Gill, Horace Avory, E. P. Purcell, and, among the younger generation, Harry Curtis-Bennett, Roland Oliver and J. D. Cassels.

On the whole, however, the criminal Bar does not attract men of quite the

same calibre as does the more remunerative work in the King's Bench and Chancery Divisions. Cases at the Old Bailey are comparatively simple and seldom involve any difficult points of law, although they offer unequalled opportunities for the clever advocate, especially when appearing for the defence. Except for those I have named, and a few others whom I have not space to mention, the standard of the criminal Bar in those days was not particularly high, and there were even a few advocates still left of what might be described as the "Serjeant Buzfuz" type, whose rampageous methods and florid oratory often created amusement among the younger members of the Bar, although it must be admitted that there were times when it was accepted at its face value by juries and as a result some surprising results were obtained.

Charles Mathews, son of the famous actor, was Senior Counsel for the Treasury (in other words, Chief Prosecutor at the Old Bailey) when I was called. His histrionic ancestry was perhaps the reason for his adoption of a somewhat melodramatic style of advocacy. His voice was squeaky and high-pitched; but he had a trick of lowering it to a whisper, pointing an accusing finger at a witness and hissing out a question like a snake. Then he would draw his gown round his shoulders, thunder forth his denunciation of some incriminating admission, and address the jury in compelling or insinuating tones. He was, however, a just and fair prosecutor, and in private life an agreeable and charming companion, as I discovered when I had the privilege of meeting him more than once at a house-party in the country.

One of the most efficient and cold-blooded of the Treasury counsel was Richard Muir. Nothing seemed to disturb him or put him out of his stride. As he grew older his asperity and lack of geniality became more marked. His cases were prepared with the utmost care, and he was usually armed with the most elaborate notes in red and blue pencil: blue for the more important statements of his own witnesses, and red for those which told against him. Although scrupulously fair in his presentation of a case—and perhaps because of it—very few guilty persons escaped when Muir appeared for the prosecution. If occasionally he failed to prove the guilt of the accused, no one was more surprised and indeed annoyed than Muir himself. One good story about him was how on a sultry hot day he was overcome by the heat, and had to be assisted out of Court. There was naturally a good deal of commotion, and everybody wanted to know what had happened.

"Oh, it is only that Muir has fainted," interjected a colleague, "because one of his prisoners has been acquitted."

That there was more than a scintilla of truth in this idiosyncrasy of Muir's I can testify from personal experience. I was briefed once at Chelmsford to defend an employee of a shipping company who was accused of pilfering. As there had apparently been a good deal of this sort of thing, and the company was anxious for the sake of example to obtain a conviction, they briefed Muir to prosecute. There was a certain element of doubt in this particular case, and I was able to persuade the jury to acquit my client. Muir was furious—so much so that he declined to speak to me afterwards, either in the robing room or the Bar Mess. This was a petty and, for the credit of the Bar I may say, an unusual display of partisanship from a senior man to a young practitioner. All the same, there is no doubt that Muir was a most proficient and formidable advocate.

Archibald Bodkin (afterwards Director of Public Prosecutions) was another of the "Treasury" team who helped to set a high standard of cold-blooded, unemotional efficiency. In presenting a case for the prosecution, he assumed the rôle of an implacable minister of justice discharging an unpleasant duty rather than an advocate, which was a great improvement on the brutal and vindictive methods of the past, and on the whole very much more deadly. This is now the established tradition of prosecuting counsel, who recognize that their primary duty is to place all the relevant facts before the court, irrespective of whether they happen to tell in favour of or against the accused, and that the ultimate verdict is—or should be—to them a matter of indifference.

Of course men like Muir, Bodkin and Travers Humphreys, as well as several other prosecuting counsel, did not figure in the public eye to the same extent as those who appeared mainly for the defence, of whom for many years the most outstanding was undoubtedly Sir Edward Marshall Hall.

With him I was fortunate enough, in my early days, to have many personal and professional associations; and no one who had the privilege of knowing him could fail to be enormously impressed. Beyond doubt he was a great advocate and a very remarkable man. To begin with, his good looks were altogether exceptional: six feet three inches in height and broad in proportion, he had the figure and gait of an athlete. His finely shaped head, silver hair, piercing eyes and aquiline features fully justified Lord Birkenhead's comment that no one could be as splendid as Marshall Hall looked. His whole appearance gave the impression of virility and buoyancy, the beau ideal of what the man in the street would imagine a famous advocate should look like. But behind all that he had qualities of character and personality hardly less admirable. His courage was undoubted; indeed there were occasions when it bordered on recklessness; his eloquence and flow of language were quite remarkable. In addition he was generous and great-hearted, although at times he could be hot-tempered, truculent and egotistical. And on this account he was often furiously criticized, both in public and private, for some ill-considered action or hasty remark; but just as he himself never bore malice, so no one could be vexed with him for long, and he was one of the very few men I have known who might truthfully be said to have been universally popular—certainly this was so during his later years, when I first got to know him.

His practice at the Bar lay almost entirely in the criminal courts, and nearly always for the defence. Only on very rare occasions did he appear for the prosecution; and when he did, his style was obviously cramped by the rigid restraint and impartiality which, as I have said, a time-honoured tradition imposes upon prosecuting counsel.

But his success when briefed for the defence—and he appeared in many of the most famous criminal trials for nearly thirty years—as well as his fame and popularity with the public, were something that has never been equalled, and certainly are not approached by any counsel at the criminal Bar today; in fact there has never been an advocate whom one might so justly have described as "The Great Defender".

Called to the Bar—the most speculative of all professions—at the age of twenty-four, he went through the usual dreary experiences of most young barristers whilst waiting for briefs that never seemed to come; and indeed so slow was his progress to begin with that he seriously contemplated abandoning the law altogether, and descending to the vulgarity, as it was then considered,

of commercial life. But fortunately, at the psychological moment, the tide turned, and slowly but surely he commenced to forge ahead until he became without question the greatest counsel for the defence of his time.

When I first met him it was at the height of his fame, and it can be imagined with what awe and trepidation I attended my first conference at his chambers. His charm of manner and friendliness, however, soon put me at my ease; and although he started off by expressing the opinion that the case in question—that of the Seddons—was the blackest in which he had ever been concerned, I was tremendously impressed by the zest and enthusiasm with which he threw himself into it: a convincing proof that belief in the innocence of one's client is not an essential preliminary to a skilful and vigorous defence.

The late Edward Marjoribanks, in his fascinating *Life of Marshall Hall*, gives an amusing impression of a typical conference, which I can fully confirm from my own experience, and therefore venture to quote in substance with appropriate acknowledgment.

The junior would come with his solicitor rather bashfully into the great man's room. He would receive a hearty welcome; whoever he was, Marshall Hall would know something about him and show that he knew it. "I have just been glancing through the depositions in this case," he would say, looking searchingly at the solicitor. "Did you cross-examine at the police-court?" "No, Sir Edward, junior counsel cross-examined." "Ah!" Marshall Hall would rejoin, "I could see that it was done by a person of ability."

And so the consultation would progress, interrupted by observations as to the recent purchase of a snuff-box or an eighteenth-century print, and punctuated by a telephone call from a stockbroker or a lady, or an urgent note which had to be read at once, delivered by hand from some famous person. When after all these diversions the conference had somehow come to an end, Marshall Hall would ask the junior to stay behind and have a chat "on an important aspect of the case". Often would follow a flow of stories and anecdotes, in which any reference to the case in hand would be irretrievably lost.

This is more or less what happened to me at that first interview. I came away more than ever impressed by his tremendous personality and zest for life. Everything seemed to interest him, and the diversity of his knowledge on all kinds of subjects was extraordinary. In particular his knowledge of medicine was quite remarkable, as also was his wonderful flair as a connoisseur of precious stones and *objets de vertu*.

Wellesley Orr, now the stipendiary magistrate for Manchester, who was one of his "devils", relates an amusing story of Marshall Hall bursting into the room one day with a huge parcel wrapped in newspaper under his arm, and exclaiming as he sat himself at Orr's desk, sweeping away papers and documents:

"Look here, Orr, I've got something really marvellous to show you."

The parcel was then undone, and the multifarious pieces of an old clock were revealed.

"Would you believe it, this is a genuine old Nuremberg clock," he said, "quite probably the first clock that ever kept time in Germany, and I bought it for a song. I hope you don't mind if I try and put it together."

Then he got busy, using all his remarkable mechanical skill—and very soon "the first clock that ever kept time in Germany" was ticking away merrily in Temple Gardens.

Marjoribanks tells of another occasion when he brought another large parcel into chambers which, on being opened, was seen to contain a litter of Pekinese puppies, who began running about all over the room and misbehaving themselves. These, Marshall Hall declared, had come straight from the sacred kennels of the Dowager Empress of China. In fact, all Marshall Hall's geese were swans; there was something superlative about everything he did. He was tremendously interested in firearms, and was himself a most marvellous shot; in fact, on one occasion, when he was Member for Southport, he entertained his constituents by shooting cigarettes out of his wife's mouth. All this diverse knowledge and experience was, of course, extremely useful to him in many famous cases, and he often used to give demonstrations of his virtuosity in court, which greatly impressed the jury.

His career in the House of Commons, like that of so many other famous advocates, was disappointing, and the failure of his maiden speech affected him deeply. Unlike Disraeli, he never forgave the House of Commons for the ridicule he had to endure on that occasion, or tried to make a position for himself, which he might easily have done.

What happened was that, for his first entry into Parliamentary debate, he chose the occasion of a Private Member's Bill, designed to prevent small children from being sent to fetch drinks at public houses. It was perhaps typical of the man that—although he would have been wiser from his own point of view to have selected a more important occasion—he was persuaded to make his speech on this particular appeal as a result of a letter received from a little girl quite unknown to him, who had apparently been encouraged—I should imagine by some extreme temperance advocate—to write to him begging his support for the measure. The fact that he responded so readily to an appeal of this kind shows what a tender and very human side there was to the character of this powerful and often overbearing advocate.

He began his speech well, and was beginning to find the atmosphere of the House, when some Member sitting behind him facetiously remarked: "Why not deliver the beer round like milk in milk-cans?" Instead of ignoring the interruption, it apparently struck a picturesque note in Marshall's mind, and having very little sense of humour, he solemnly accepted the suggestion that the difficulty might be got over in this way. The House rocked with laughter; and Marshall, who could not stand ridicule, became extremely angry, with the result that the speech was a complete failure. After that—largely through his own fault—he was never regarded as a serious politician, nor did he ever make any real effort to impress his personality upon the House. Furthermore, the milk-can business, as Edward Marjoribanks says, followed him relentlessly for years and did him real harm, even to the extent of losing him his seat at the next election, when it was alleged that he had been bought by the brewers, and that, whilst pretending to advocate temperance, he had really been serving the trade. On the platform, however, he was a great asset to the Conservative Party, and there were many public causes which lay near his heart, and about which he spoke with passion and sincerity: such, for instance, as a modification of capital punishment and also the institution of an office of Public Defender. In addition, he had strong views regarding the reform of the marriage laws, the protection of young children and the prevention of cruelty to animals. Yet, strangely enough, he never spoke in the House itself on any of these subjects, where his experience might have carried weight. Indeed, after his initial Parliamentary failure, he wilfully threw away any hopes he once entertained of a Parliamentary career.

This, however, did not affect his practice at the Bar, where his position—especially when appearing for the defence in criminal *causes célèbres*—was unique and overwhelming.

I was with Marshall Hall in one of the last cases he ever had at the Bar, shortly before his death. We were appearing for the prosecution in the trial of a girl for infanticide, a tragic case which deeply affected Marshall's sympathetic nature. Whilst waiting for the case to come on I had a lengthy talk with him, in the course of which he spoke more freely than I had ever known him to do before, about some of the tragic incidents of his early life and struggles at the Bar, and I never knew him in quite so mellow and gentle a mood: it was as if he felt conscious of the lengthening shadows, and knew that the time was rapidly approaching when he would be leaving this troubled world for another sphere, in which the greatest of defenders must meet his own judge and make answer in his own cause. Although he had his faults—and who has not?—I shall always remember him, not only as a wonderful advocate, but as a fine character and a most likable man.

There were two other famous counsel for the defence of my time of whom I must make some mention: Harry Curtis-Bennett and "Jimmy" Cassels (now Mr. Justice Cassels). With both of them I am happy to have had a real personal friendship—not only at the Bar, but also when we were colleagues in the House of Commons. For some years they ran neck and neck, and were opposed to each other in many of the criminal trials which made front page news. They both had a real gift of oratory, coupled with a delightful sense of humour, which made them in private life two of the most genial and entertaining companions anyone could desire to meet. Strangely enough, neither made any particular mark in the House of Commons, probably because they were too busy elsewhere.

Curtis-Bennett will always be remembered with affection by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. In physical appearance his proportions were Falstaffian: so much so that it was impossible to believe that in his younger days he had been a well-known racing cyclist. But although his immense bulk was a sign of ill-health and largely accounted for his tragic death at the age of fifty-seven, it was probably something of an asset to him at the Bar, for he exuded geniality and good fellowship, which undoubtedly had a considerable effect on both judges and juries. He was never averse to making jokes about his physical appearance, and seldom delivered an after-dinner speech—an art at which he excelled—without capitalizing in some way his generous proportions with an amusing story, the best known of which was when he is supposed to have met Horatio Bottomley shortly after that misguided financier had been released from prison. Curtis greeted him by saying how well he looked, and in reply Bottomley regarded him solemnly for a moment or two, and said:

"Yes; as a matter of fact the regime saved my life," and then he added: "It looks to me as though three years would not do you much harm!"

Curtis-Bennett and Cassels have sons practising at the Bar who seem likely to maintain the parental tradition. It is always a pleasure to me and revives in my mind agreeable memories of the past when from time to time they make a professional appearance in my Court.

The judges of today do not strike one as being—I will not say of the same calibre, because that certainly would not be true—but as possessing the dominant

personalities of many of those whom I remember in my early days at the Bar. To some extent this may be due to the fact that, as a young barrister, one regarded the Bench with an awe and reverence which it is difficult to feel towards friends and contemporaries who now fill those august positions.

All the same, there is no one to compare with the late Sir Charles Russell, in his heyday one of the finest advocates who ever practised at the Bar, and certainly one of the most impressive personalities who ever sat upon the Bench.

I only saw him once in the flesh, but I have never forgotten it, although I was only a boy at the time. The occasion was one November 9th, when, as Lord Chief Justice, he had to receive the new Lord Mayor of London, who customarily presents himself at the Law Courts to be welcomed and congratulated by the Chief Justice on behalf of His Majesty's judges. But this time things certainly did not go according to plan, because it so happened that the Lord Mayor in question had been connected with certain financial enterprises which had come in for a good deal of unfavourable public criticism. The grim "Lord Chief" was not inclined to let this pass, so, instead of indulging in the usual compliments, he took advantage of the opportunity to deliver a stern homily on the standards of financial and commercial rectitude which ought to animate those elevated to high civic offices. Although he did not refer directly to the new Lord Mayor, everyone knew to what he was alluding. It was a most painful scene: the Lord Mayor, in his scarlet gown, lace and gold chain, turned alternately white and red, and a pin could be heard drop in the Court. It certainly made a deep impression on everyone who was present.

On the whole, however, I believe there exists today a higher level of courtesy and tolerance towards the Bar on the part of the judges, and less personal eccentricity than in the case of some of their predecessors.

Among the present-day Lord Justices of Appeal, for instance, there is no one the least like old Sir Roland Vaughan-Williams, whose down-at-heel and moth-eaten appearance earned for him the nickname of "Roly-poly". He was an eminent lawyer, but a most curious individual. Even when he was Lord Justice, his wife used to bring his lunch to the Law Courts every day in a small basket, and they partook of it together in the privacy of his room. When I remember him he was generally presiding in Appeal Court No. 2, having as his colleagues Swinfen-Eady and Fletcher Moulton, who frequently did not trouble to disguise their impatience at Vaughan-Williams' somewhat garrulous interruptions of counsels' arguments. Swinfen-Eady had a sour frosty smile, and a gift of sarcasm which made him an altogether terrifying judge to any young counsel; whilst Fletcher Moulton was reputed to have the quickest brain of any man on the Bench. In addition to his legal attainments he was a distinguished scientist, and in this connection rendered great service to the country during the First World War, and a brilliant classical scholar: indeed I have heard him facetiously described as being so clever as to be almost a public danger!

There were very few counsel who relished an appearance before this formidable tribunal, the members of which were frequently reported not to be on speaking terms with one another. This made it necessary to walk warily, as too great a deference to the views of any one of them was apt to create a certain prejudice in the minds of the other two.

But it is not so much Lord Justices of the Court of Appeal—before whom my appearances were comparatively infrequent—as of certain King's Bench and County Court judges that I still retain the most vivid memories.

Most of them, as one would expect, were men who splendidly upheld the high traditions of the English Bench; but this did not prevent some of them from being "characters", whose peculiarities and idiosyncrasies repaid a certain amount of study from counsel practising before them.

There was Mr. Justice Horridge, for instance, who first came into the limelight owing to his sensational victory over Mr. Arthur Balfour in the General Election of 1906, and who thereafter gave the impression of never having quite recovered from his fortuitous triumph. His appointment to the Bench four years later was generally regarded as political; but nevertheless he was a just and painstaking judge. His main defect was that he always seemed somewhat over-impressed by a sense of his own dignity, and manifested a certain tendency towards Olympianism, which made him rather trying from the point of view of the Bar. On one occasion at the assizes, when appearing for the defence in what was bound to be a protracted trial, I made the usual application that my client might have permission to be seated. This called forth a lecture from Horridge on the respect owing to the Court, and that inasmuch as His Majesty's Judges of Assize were the personal representatives of the Sovereign, an accused person should remain standing whilst in their presence, unless disabled by age or infirmity. So my unfortunate client had to stand throughout the whole trial, which lasted many hours.

On another occasion, when on circuit, Horridge was invited to dinner by the High Sheriff of the county, and it is said he did not hesitate to display his weighty disapproval because a certain duke who happened to be one of the guests was given precedence, and asked to take in the hostess. This the judge chose to consider a personal affront to himself as His Majesty's representative, who, he claimed, should take precedence over everyone else. Probably he was right in this, but I think there are few men who would have cared to raise the point under such circumstances.

He was disconcerting also in other ways. One never quite knew how to take him, and he had, moreover, a peculiar mannerism of twisting his face into what appeared like a grin; but woe betide any counsel who allowed himself to be misled by this apparent geniality, for there was certainly no mirth in it. All the same he was an able and efficient judge, who had the merit of getting things done, and who did his work with conscientiousness and despatch.

Then there was Rigby Swift, who was quite a different type. He was a typical product of Lancashire, with all the qualities of directness and vigorous speech and action which distinguish the Lancastrian. But although an admirable judge, he also had his little peculiarities, one of which was the somewhat irritating habit of tapping the desk with his pencil if he considered counsel or witnesses were pursuing a false point or wasting the time of the Court in any way. But sometimes he met his match, for on one occasion the pencil had been going tap-tap-tap for some time like a machine-gun, but without the offending counsel taking any notice, until Swift could bear it no longer, and burst out:

"Really Mr. —, where are we now?"

"About the middle of my cross-examination, my lord," was the imperturbable reply; and the judge took it in good part, for no matter how irritable he might be at times, it very soon passed.

I remember once having a very trying day before Swift at Maidstone Assizes when he was constantly interrupting—as I thought quite needlessly—and the atmosphere had been distinctly uncomfortable. Shortly before the Court rose, however, a pencil note was handed to me. It was from the judge,

and contained an invitation to dine with him that night. Needless to say, I went with very great pleasure, and no one could have been a more charming host.

There are many judges of the past of whom I retain similar vivid recollections. For obvious reasons, however, I can only mention one or two.

There is, of course, no reputation more ephemeral than that of a judge: whilst on the Bench he is a powerful and impressive figure; but once he is gone his very name is forgotten, except in so far as it may be preserved in some dry-as-dust law report. Apart from that, his personality and achievements can only live in the memory of those who knew him at the Bar or practised before him when on the Bench.

In the popular estimation the greatest of all criminal judges in my time was Mr. Justice Avory. He presided at many of the most notorious criminal trials of the century: such, for instance, as that of Brown and Kennedy, who were hanged for the brutal murder of Police Constable Gutteridge; of Jean Pierre Vacquier, a repellent-looking bearded Frenchman, who rivalled Landru in the mysterious fascination he exercised over the opposite sex; of Patrick Mahon, the "Crumbles" murderer; of T. H. Allaway and many others. He also tried Clarence Hatry and his associates for perhaps the most amazing financial frauds of history. In all these cases he seemed the embodiment of ruthless relentless justice, which earned for him a grim reputation as a "hanging judge". To some extent, of course, this merely meant that a guilty person was less likely to escape when tried before Avory than some other judge less clear-headed, less meticulously careful in his summing-up, and possibly a little more of a sentimentalist.

In appearance Avory was a small, wizened and—off the Bench—insignificant figure, but in his wig and scarlet robe he was impressive and sometimes overwhelming. That he was a severe judge who certainly did not err on the side of leniency cannot be denied. On the other hand, if I had been accused of some crime of which I was innocent, I would rather have been tried by Avory than by any judge on the Bench. But if I were guilty and my offence was a serious one, I should have known I could expect little mercy. Yet to my mind justice divorced from mercy is barren and sterile, and for this reason I do not believe Avory can be numbered among those judges of the past who have most nearly approached the ideal of judicial perfection.

Another judge who figured much in the public eye was Mr. Justice Darling (afterwards Lord Darling). He also seemed to lack something of the deep humanity which is the mark of a great judge. His appointment to the High Court Bench at the early age of forty-seven was much criticized at the time as a job. He certainly had not much practice at the Bar, nor had he rendered any outstanding political services which might entitle him to such a position; and many eminent leaders at the Bar—among them the late Lord Oxford—were bitterly incensed by the appointment. The suggestion was even made of presenting a memorial of protest to Lord Halsbury, who had appointed him. This was foolish, of course, for once a judge has been appointed he cannot be removed except on the intervention of the Sovereign consequent upon an address from both Houses of Parliament.

That Darling survived all this criticism, and was able to win general recognition as a painstaking and efficient judge, is of course no small proof of his

ability. A great judge he could never be; but that he was a cultured and highly intelligent man with a sparkling lively wit is beyond doubt. Indeed I suppose it is chiefly for his wit that he will be remembered. And yet I fancy most people would agree that it was his incurable love of jesting on the Bench which detracted most from the judicial eminence he might otherwise have achieved.

There is nothing easier than for anyone occupying a judicial position to create laughter in Court. Owing to the solemnity and incongruity of the surroundings, even the feeblest witticism will generally succeed in raising a smile; and in addition there is always a certain number of people present who laugh more or less deferentially at any joke emanating from the Bench.

But a judge or magistrate should remember that, no matter how trivial or humorous the case may appear to him, it is a matter of considerable moment to the parties, who not unnaturally feel indignant if they think the matter is being treated lightly or frivolously; and this is especially so in a criminal court, where the liberties and reputation and sometimes the very lives of accused persons are at stake. Therefore it is seldom justifiable, however tempted one may be, to make jokes at the expense of parties or witnesses who are in Court for a serious purpose. Now and then a joke may help to relieve the tension, or put a nervous witness at his ease, but such occasions are rare. Darling, however, constantly went out of his way to make jokes which had obviously been carefully prepared, and were not always in the best of taste.

On the other hand, he could be at times really amusing and even brilliant, for he had a nimble wit; but one could not escape the feeling how much better they would have been at some other time and in different surroundings. Yet he had many distinguished judicial qualities, and could generally be relied upon to do justice and to give any accused person or litigant a fair trial.

I might, as I have said, continue at any length in recalling these eminent judges of the past, but limitations of space forbid, and I have merely mentioned a few of the better known. But let me say this, that the best judges are not always by any means those who figure most prominently in the public eye. For instance, Mr. Justice Atkin (now Lord Atkin) will, I think, always be remembered as a very much greater judge than many of his far better-known colleagues, and the same might be said of Mr. (afterwards Lord) Justice Eldon Bankes, Mr. Justice Pickford (afterwards Lord Sterndale) and a number of others about whom the general public knew very little and comparatively few stories are told.

My first brief of any substance came as a gift from Heaven through the good influence of an old friend of my father's. It was to appear on behalf of a firm of quantity surveyors who were claiming for fees in connection with a complicated building contract. There were many technical points involved of which I could not claim to have had any practical experience whatever. To my great relief, therefore, the case was ultimately settled out of Court on satisfactory terms. It was, however, a wonderful thrill to read my name on the back sheet, and particularly to note that it was marked with a fee of "Ten and one": the first money I had ever earned at my profession, and best of all to find a cheque for this amount tucked in the tape.

This agreeable practice of paying in advance is, I am afraid, largely disappearing, for very seldom during my subsequent career did I ever receive a cheque with the brief. In fact the delay in paying counsels' fees often amounts

to a scandal: one large and very well-known firm of solicitors for whom I frequently appeared made a practice of never settling counsels' fees under a year, which meant that at any given time they must have had thousands of pounds owing to members of the Bar, on cases completely finished, and no doubt were able to cover a very considerable proportion of their overhead expenses with the interest obtained by holding up fees which ought to have found their way into the pockets of the counsel who had earned them many months previously.

Although my practice was never a large one, and was mainly of the hum-drum bread-and-butter variety, there are just a few memories which it is interesting to recall.

For instance, an amusing case with something of a political flavour arose out of the by-election at Hythe in 1912, in which I had myself taken an active part in support of my friend, Sir Philip Sassoon, who was the Conservative candidate.

The election campaign had been conducted throughout in the best possible spirit, both by Sassoon, for whom it was a perfectly sure seat, and by his Liberal opponent, Captain Moorhouse. Unfortunately, however, an enthusiastic supporter of Sassoon, a local publican of sporting tendencies, conceived the idea of publishing on his own a last-minute appeal to the electors in the form of a race-card, which read as follows:

First South Coast Race of the Season:

Hythe Borough Stakes.

Sassoon.—Empire Maker out of Colonial Preference.

Jockey—Bonar Law.

Moorhouse.—Empire Breaker out of Welsh Thief.

Jockey—Redmond.

Sassoon led from start to finish and won by 2,000 lengths. Easy going.

Captain Moorhouse, instead of treating this publication with contempt, unwisely took the view that it implied he was a dishonest person, son of a Welsh thief and totally unfit for decent society. He therefore launched his action, which was ultimately tried before Mr. Justice (afterwards Lord Justice) Scrutton and a special jury. I was briefed on behalf of the defendant, and was led by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Ellis Hume-Williams, K.C., M.P. Our line, of course, was to minimize the whole thing, and have the case laughed out of Court as a pure triviality. We had an easy passage because, under cross-examination, Captain Moorhouse was compelled to admit that he had substantially reduced Sassoon's majority as compared with the previous election, and that therefore, if anything, the publication might be said to have benefited him rather than done him any harm. All the same, he suggested the poster would probably be remembered and prejudice his chance in a future election. For him, alas, there was no other election, for two years later came the Great War, and he, like so many others, made the supreme sacrifice.

The judge was throughout most unsympathetic to the plaintiff, and had evidently formed the opinion that the case ought never to have been brought. This view was shared by the jury, and the unfortunate Captain, in addition to losing the election, also lost his case.

The boundless charity of the nation, especially during the early days of the First Great War, was exploited in a somewhat cruel manner by another client of



MR. BALDWIN AND THE AUTHOR AT LOWESTOFT



MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL AT BECCLES



SOMERLEYTON, 1925

(Group includes) Lord and Lady Somerleyton, Countess Cadogan, Lord Huntingfield, M.P., Rt. Hon. Sir Douglas Hogg, K.C., M.P. (Attorney-General), Brig.-General Sir Thomas and Lady Jackson, F. J. Farrell, J.P., Pierce Loftus, M.P., J. F. Coates (Agent), and the Author.

mine, on whose behalf I spent a couple of days at Bow Street in September 1914. This ingenious and impecunious gentleman conceived a bright idea: that of running a very small office and affixing to the door a very large brass plate, representing himself thereon as the "Society of War Distressed Gentlewomen". He then had a large number of medallions manufactured bearing the portrait of Queen Alexandra. These were attached to cards which bore the following inscription:

CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS FOR OUR POOR BOYS AT THE FRONT

These medallions are sold to credit a fund to be expended in sending Christmas puddings and other much needed little luxuries to our soldiers, sailors and nurses at the Front.

Our effort is also to assist War Distressed Gentlewomen, who otherwise would be unemployed and in grave distress.

My philanthropist then obtained by advertisement the assistance of a number of respectable women, who, for a few shillings a day, were employed by him to go out and sell these medallions to the charitably minded, from whom in many instances substantial sums were obtained. The business in fact soon became a very profitable one; but from first to last the only person who obtained any Christmas pudding or "other much needed little luxuries" was the ingenious gentleman himself. For some time all went well until some sport was unkind enough to call the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions to my client's activities: with the result that he received an urgent request to appear at the Bow Street Police Court. He was prosecuted by Travers Humphreys (now Mr. Justice Humphreys), and although he had the advantage of my assistance, he received from an unsympathetic magistrate—without, I am bound to say, any deep regret on my part—the well-merited reward of his misplaced philanthropy.

A dramatic episode in which I was professionally concerned, and one which was somewhat reminiscent of a Phillips Oppenheim novel, was connected with the proposed sale to a French syndicate of what the newspapers at the time luridly described as the "Death Ray". This was an ingenious device of a certain Mr. Grindell-Matthews, who claimed that he could stop the engine of an aeroplane or other machine by means of a powerful wireless ray focused upon it. At that time the range of this ray or beam was extremely limited, but it was thought its possibilities might be enormous.

That there was something in the claim I can myself testify, for in his workshop Grindell-Matthews had fitted up an aeroplane propeller and engine. On a bench at the other end of the shop, some forty yards away, was his electrical apparatus. When the engine was started up and the propeller was revolving rapidly, he was undoubtedly able to slow it down and finally bring it to a standstill by means of the ray. At all events, his claims as to this and also a submarine detecting device were subjected to exhaustive tests by the British Government, and he was paid a large sum of money. Indeed, matters had progressed so far that, after a careful examination by the Director of Scientific Research at the Air Ministry, it was suggested that if certain further tests were successful the Government would purchase the invention for a sum to be agreed upon.

Some clients of mine, however, had an interest in the potentialities of the invention and had financed Grindell-Matthews to the extent of many thousands of pounds. For this they claimed he had given them a fifty per cent ownership, and not unnaturally they strongly objected to negotiations being carried on behind their backs.

But Grindell-Matthews, who was not a business man and was, moreover, somewhat impetuous and headstrong, took umbrage at what he considered unjustifiable interference with his methods of work. Matters were brought to a head when it was learnt that in a fit of pique he was leaving by air for France in order to sell his invention, lock, stock and barrel, to a powerful French combine.

Sir Douglas Hogg (Lord Hailsham) and I were instructed to apply immediately for an injunction preventing him from thus disposing of the device without the consent of our clients. As every hour was of importance, if we were to stop his departure, we tore across to the Courts and succeeded in obtaining an interim injunction. Our instructing solicitor at once jumped into a waiting car and drove off hell for leather to Croydon Aerodrome, but arrived there sixty seconds too late just as the 'plane carrying Grindell-Matthews out of the country was skimming across the ground. A pursuing 'plane was immediately chartered; and then began an exciting race across the skies. It was of course vital to reach him and serve a copy of the injunction before he disclosed the secret to the French combine. Fortunately the fugitive was found in time in a Paris hotel and persuaded to see reason and obey the Order of the Court.

There were perhaps some grounds for his complaint—both against our clients and the British Government. The latter, in particular, would certainly seem to have been somewhat dilatory and niggardly in the terms they offered. At all events Matthews indignantly denied that his motives were unpatriotic or in any way sordid, but insisted on his right to dispose of his invention as he thought best. The matter was finally settled on terms satisfactory to all parties; but so far the wireless ray has not been developed to such an extent as to render it of practical utility, although that may come.

Grindell-Matthews, however, had to his credit many other remarkable inventions. He was, for instance, the first to establish wireless telephonic communication with an aeroplane in flight; and he did much to develop radio telephony, which is of such vital importance at the present time. In 1912 he gave a demonstration at Buckingham Palace to the King and Queen of wireless communication, between two motor-cars, which is now used so extensively in tank operations and mechanical warfare generally. He also invented a means of controlling ships by the beam of a searchlight and of firing guns by the same method. He later turned his attention to films, and in 1921 made a sound film of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Unfortunately his patent had expired before the great American "Talkie" boom got under way. Later he demonstrated a projector for throwing pictures and writing on the ceiling of the sky.

Another invention of his was the luminaphone, a device by which an organ could be played by a beam of light. He was certainly a genius, and if he had possessed greater business capacity would undoubtedly have made a vast fortune. He died in September 1941 at the age of sixty-one, without ever becoming what he might well have been, except for bad luck, a world-famous figure.

In another action, not without its touch of romance, I appeared for Mr. Mischa Elman, the famous violinist. He had made the acquaintance of an attractive young lady, to whom he undertook to give a few music lessons. As a result she was invited to play at a concert, and Mr. Elman generously loaned her one of his own violins for the purpose, which happened to be a

Stradivarius of considerable value. With a surprising lack of gratitude, however, the young lady was unwilling to return so valuable and interesting a pledge of the great violinist's one-time interest. She declared that the instrument had been given to her as a present and not merely as a loan. As a result, Mischa Elman found himself compelled to sue her for detainment. Doubtless she imagined that he would be unwilling to "face the music"; since, however, he was prepared to do so there was really no defence, although an old Oxford friend of mine, H. I. P. Hallett (now a High Court judge), argued persuasively on his fair client's right to retain the violin, which had considerable intrinsic value—apart from its romantic associations.

In 1912 I had the professional good luck to be briefed for the defence in what proved to be one of the most sensational and interesting criminal trials on record: that of the Seddons for murder. I have already described at some length in an earlier book certain of its outstanding features.* Seddon was an insurance agent in North London, a cool, calculating and extremely able man, and he and his wife were accused of having poisoned with arsenic a certain Miss Eliza Barrow, who had lodged for some time in their house: the alleged—and indeed obvious—motive being Seddon's greed for gold, for he was a miser of a type not usually found outside the pages of fiction. Miss Barrow—unfortunately for herself as events turned out—possessed about £1,600 in cash and securities. The whole of this sum she had transferred to Seddon in return for the promise of an annuity, and no sooner was the matter completed than she conveniently died from arsenical poisoning.

After a ten days' trial packed with thrills Seddon was convicted and his wife acquitted. Although I had defended both of them throughout the police court proceedings, when the case reached the Old Bailey Sir Edward Marshall Hall, who had then been briefed to lead for the defence, occupied himself exclusively on behalf of Seddon, and I appeared for the wife—a very much easier task; but in effect this meant, of course, that the real burden of the defence of both prisoners rested upon my brilliant and famous leader.

To that case, however, there was a curious aftermath, which does not reflect any credit upon the methods employed by certain "popular" newspapers in order to supply their public with sensational reading matter.

Let me say at once that, so far as Mrs. Seddon was concerned, I never had the slightest doubt that she was completely innocent of the charge, and the jury showed no hesitation in arriving at the same conclusion. Not only that, but Rufus Isaacs, who led for the prosecution, seemed to have the same feeling, for he certainly did not press the case against her in anything like the same remorseless way as against her husband.

Yet when the case was over and Mrs. Seddon was once more a free woman, she exploded a bombshell; firstly, by marrying again within a few weeks of the execution of her former husband, and secondly, by contributing an article to a Sunday newspaper, boasting of an enormous circulation, in which she made an alleged confession of her entire complicity in the crime. As most people are aware, once a person has been acquitted of a criminal charge they can never be retried for the same offence, and therefore, with entire impunity, may if they choose proclaim their guilt publicly from the house-tops.

In her confession, the former Mrs. Seddon went so far as to say that she

* *Sometimes I Think*. Hodder & Stoughton, 1940.

actually saw her husband put arsenic into Miss Barrow's medicine, and that he did so on several occasions. Moreover, that no sooner was life extinct than he himself took her clothes off, explaining to his wife that it was important that the body should become cold as soon as possible, in order that the doctor might imagine that the poor woman had died before he (Seddon) came home. She added that, although terrified out of her wits, she was forced to keep silence because Seddon threatened to shoot her with a revolver if she uttered a single word or dared to inform the police, and that this confession was now being made in order that her children might in some way be vindicated in the eyes of the public.

As the trial itself had been a nine days' wonder, and the whole country had been ringing with its details, naturally this statement created an immense sensation. But the matter did not rest there. A week later a rival newspaper came out with a solemn recantation by Mrs. Seddon of her previous confession. This time she swore an affidavit in which she entirely refuted the statement she had made, and alleged that the newspaper in question had sent a representative to see her who had questioned her first on one point and then another, and had written up the story entirely on his own initiative, and that none of the statements in it had the slightest basis of truth. This I believe to be the fact. Mrs. Seddon was a person obviously of little personality or will-power, very easily influenced and entirely under the domination of her husband. The last thing on earth he would have been likely to do would be to allow his wife to share his grim secret. Furthermore, there is not the slightest doubt that Mrs. Seddon nursed Miss Barrow throughout her last illness with the utmost devotion; and it would take a woman of the mental calibre of a Lady Macbeth to have watched the final agonies whilst knowing at the same time that they had been caused by her husband's callous and cruel act. On the other hand, this comment may be made: Seddon did possess a revolver. As Edward Marjoribanks relates, when his solicitor went on one occasion to view his house before his arrest, he noticed a picture in the worst of taste hanging on the dining-room wall, depicting a husband shooting his wife's lover. Seddon not only drew attention to this picture, but producing at the same time a revolver from his desk, said: "That is the sort of man I am, only I would have shot them both."

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I also appeared—both as a junior and as a "silk"—on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions in a number of trials for murder and other criminal offences on the South-Eastern Circuit, and for some years held the appointment of standing counsel for the Attorney-General in cases under the Legitimacy Act, which enabled children born out of wedlock to be legitimized through the subsequent marriage of their parents. For two or three years after the passing of this Act there was quite a rush of petitions, in all of which the Attorney-General was by statute compelled to be cited as a party. The reason was that, as this matter affected the status of the individual in regard to the inheritance of property on intestacy and in other ways, it was considered that certain public interests might be involved, and that the Crown should be represented.

Many curious cases came to light. One of the most strange was that of three sisters, all extremely well known in Society and two of them married to peers, who applied for legitimacy, as it turned out that their parents were unmarried at the time of their birth some forty or fifty years previously. I never quite understood why they troubled about it, as it merely meant turning

the floodlight of publicity on what would never have been known except to the parties intimately concerned.

On the whole, my most pleasant memories of the Bar are connected with life on circuit. The circuit system is interesting from an historical point of view, and for the young barrister it is one of the most socially agreeable and professionally useful features of life at the Bar. It is to be regretted that nowadays circuits are tending to decrease in importance as legal work becomes more and more centralized in London and in a few of the larger provincial cities where there is a "local" Bar. In my time it was essential for everyone practising in the King's Bench Division to join a circuit, and those who had any influence in or connection with a particular county were wise to join the circuit of which that county was a part. Lawyers thus banded themselves together, as they had done for centuries, to follow the King's Justices three or four times a year round various parts of the country.

Born and bred Londoners like myself, without any territorial connections elsewhere, generally found it convenient to join what is known as the South-Eastern or "Home" Circuit, comprising Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Surrey, Kent and Sussex. As, however, most of the assize towns on this circuit—except perhaps Norwich—were within easy distances of the metropolis, it was seldom necessary to remain overnight; and as a result it was unusual for more than two or three members of the Bar to be found dining in Mess. If one did stay the night, it was customary at each town to put up at the hotel where the Bar Mess had its headquarters, and where, among other amenities, the foresight of our predecessors had enabled the Mess to acquire a good cellar of wine. On one occasion, at Bury St. Edmunds, Ernest Wild (afterwards Recorder of London) and I happened to be opposed to each other in the last case in the calendar, and it being too late to return home that night, we dined alone together in the Bar Mess. The circuit butler, an exceedingly dignified and good-looking man, who possessed—among other claims to distinction—that of being the father of a very charming and well-known "musical comedy" peeress, produced from the recesses of the cellar a bottle of "Crimean" port, which had lain there for over sixty years in the Bar Mess wine-bins. I recall the incident because it taught me that there is a time limit for port as for anything else. However interesting historically, as wine its day was done! All the body had gone out of it, and it was almost as thin as water and as pale in colour.

It is on circuit that one experiences the real camaraderie of the Bar, and is afforded an opportunity of meeting one's brother barristers in social intercourse. There is a kind of collegiate atmosphere about it which brings back one's youth, and induces—when out of Court—a spirit of conviviality and lightheartedness. Membership of the circuit forms much the same sort of bond as having belonged to the same school or college. In the old days, before railway trains and motor-cars were thought of, it must have been quite good fun, for then the circuit members followed the judges from one assize town to another round the entire circuit, living, dining and wining together *en route*, and, after the day's work was done, sharing together every kind of recreation and amusement.

In 1919, as a result of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, women became eligible for call to the Bar. At first quite a number of girl students made their appearance at one or other of the Inns of Court; but it would be idle,

even after twenty-five years' experience, to pretend that women have made any particular mark as practising barristers. From one point of view this is perhaps surprising, as many of them have distinguished themselves in the examinations and are known to be good lawyers. Doubtless in the legal profession, as in most others, women have had to contend with a certain amount of prejudice—not so much from their male competitors as from the public generally. This certainly has been—and still is to some extent—the case in regard to the medical profession; but even when one makes allowances for this it must be admitted that the Bar is not the most suitable profession for women, and that their failure to make substantial progress is perhaps not to be wondered at. The weary waiting for briefs, the long hours that have to be spent in distant and out-of-the-way county courts, the rough and tumble of professional life, the hectic spells of hard work under great pressure alternating with long periods of enforced idleness, the years that must necessarily elapse before success is achieved even under the best conditions are likely to break the spirit, harass the soul and destroy the looks and feminine charm of nine women out of ten.

Furthermore, there is the question whether women are not temperamentally unsuited to make good advocates, except perhaps for a cause in which their personal feelings are deeply engaged.

Women are by nature partisans, which is perhaps one of their greatest attractions, and if they happen to feel deeply they find it more difficult than men to see the other side of a case. For this reason it has sometimes been suggested that a woman's brain does not work on the same logical basis as a man's, and that she is too ready to be swayed by her personal feelings and emotions. I certainly think it is true that women as a rule dislike generalities and are prone to give every argument a personal application. These things may possibly account for their comparative failure at the Bar.

In 1929 I had my first experience of judicial office. Through the kindness of my friend, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, I was appointed Recorder of Sandwich. Although the emoluments are not great, this is a particularly ancient and historic office, dating back to the twelfth century, and possessing many pleasant amenities for the holder. My immediate predecessor had been Cecil Whiteley, K.C. (afterwards Common Serjeant of London), whilst among those who have held the position in the past were Judge Lumley Smith, K.C., H. MacMorran, K.C., Sir Patrick Rose-Innes, K.C., and many other well-known legal figures; the present occupant being another old friend of mine—Sydney Turner, K.C.

Sandwich is one of the famous Cinque Ports, and centuries ago was an important and flourishing seaport. Today most of its glory has departed, and it is mainly celebrated as a golfer's Mecca, owing to the fact that two championship courses—St. George's and Princes—are situated there. Unfortunately, however, I was not a good enough golfer to take much advantage of these delightful facilities.

The small Courthouse or Guildhall dates back to 1100, and of its kind is quite unique with its beautiful oak panelling and stained-glass windows. No more appropriate or dignified setting for a court of justice could be imagined. In spite of the fact that the Court's jurisdiction now embraces the large and populous borough of Ramsgate, Walmer and the village of Sarre, famous for its cherry brandy, the work was not heavy. Only on one occasion do I remember having a really full day, and that was when a local doctor was charged with

a grave offence, and after a brilliant defence by J. D. Cassels was acquitted at 9.30 at night, the Court having sat continuously for nearly eleven hours. Otherwise I was more often than not presented with a pair of white gloves, in accordance with ancient custom when there are no prisoners seeking deliverance at the bar.

I thoroughly enjoyed my four week-end visits to Sandwich each year, the Quarter Sessions being held on a Saturday, to suit the general convenience of the Recorder, magistrates and jury. At that time Grand Juries had not been abolished; consequently, my first duty at each Sessions was to "charge the Grand Jury", which I did in full-bottomed wig and with, I trust, due solemnity. They would then retire to consider whether or not to return a "True Bill" in the cases committed to them; in other words, decide whether there existed a *prima facie* case. As this had already been done by the committing magistrates, it was no doubt an unnecessary duplication of labour, and for this reason Grand Juries have now been swept away, in spite of vigorous protests from many eminent legal authorities, who considered that a valuable safeguard which had existed for centuries in the administration of justice was being needlessly and unwisely abandoned.

It was customary for the Mayors of both Sandwich and Ramsgate to sit beside the Recorder, on his right and left hand, and to be present on all ceremonial occasions. This raised questions of precedence which occasionally demanded a certain amount of tact and diplomacy on the part of the Recorder, the Mayor of Sandwich basing his claim on the antiquity and historic significance of his borough, and tending to regard Ramsgate as an upstart mushroom town, whilst the Mayor of Ramsgate, on the other hand, pointed to the size and importance of his borough compared with Sandwich, which had now sunk into comparative insignificance.

The Mayor of Ramsgate wore the usual red gown on these occasions, but the Mayor of Sandwich always appeared in black, in perpetual mourning, it is said, for the murder of one of his predecessors by the French, in a "commando" raid of the Middle Ages.

Although Sandwich is a small Recordership, it is certainly one of the most pleasant and interesting, and it was with very real regret that I had to give it up on my appointment as a Metropolitan magistrate in 1934.

CHAPTER IV

ELECTIONEERING—HUMOURS AND PERSONALITIES

LIKE Sam Weller's knowledge of London, my electioneering experience has been "extensive and peculiar".

During my twelve years in the House of Commons I fought five hotly contested elections, and was successful on each occasion. In addition I took part in innumerable by-elections elsewhere and addressed political meetings in almost every constituency throughout England and Wales.

This gave me a unique opportunity of contrasting the various types of audiences in different parts of the country, and of noting how much more politically-minded some were than others, how much quicker in the uptake, how much more responsive and enthusiastic.

With the exception of London, I should have no hesitation in awarding the palm in these respects to the north country, where for some reason I cannot explain political interest seems infinitely keener than in the south. At all events no speaker can fail to be immensely stimulated by the vigour and enthusiasm with which a Lancashire audience, for instance, will express its approval—or disapproval!

How different to East Anglia, where for the most part one is listened to in unbroken silence, and frequently has difficulty in knowing, not merely whether one's auditors agree or disagree with the arguments advanced, but whether they have even understood what one was talking about. Their minds are for the most part a sealed book, although occasionally one gets a surprise.

I remember speaking at an election meeting of my own in a village school-room. Sitting in the front row of a very scanty audience was a typical agricultural labourer who, from his venerable appearance, might well have qualified for the "oldest inhabitant". He sat there, an old felt hat on his head, a fringe of white whisker under his chin, his hands resting on the knees of his corduroy trousers, staring stolidly at me throughout my speech. When it was over the chairman invited questions, and, to my great surprise, the old man said he would like to put one. I advanced to the front of the platform, and he then slowly and emphatically asked me:

"If you are returned to Par-ly-ment, will you promise to do away with perpetual pensions?"

This was something of a staggerer, and I replied:

"I am not sure that I understand the question. If it means what I think it does, I believe the only perpetual pension now in existence is one granted to Lord Nelson and his descendants."

"That's it," said the old gentleman, and he repeated his question even more emphatically.

"But," I remonstrated, "that pension was awarded to the great Lord Nelson and his heirs by a grateful country in recognition of his outstanding services to the State, and it would be a breach of honour to withdraw it now."

To this he listened without moving a muscle, and immediately repeated his original question, whereupon I replied:

"For the reasons already stated, I could not give any such pledge."

"You mean you won't?"

"I mean I won't."

"Very well: *then you won't have my vote.*"

And that was that. Doubtless what had happened was that someone in the village "pub" had mentioned to the old man the existence of this particular grant, and contrasting it with his own precarious and meagre livelihood he was determined not to vote for anyone who would not promise to get rid of what seemed to him a monstrous injustice. The fate of the Empire, the problems of agriculture and other matters of supreme importance meant nothing to him in comparison with this one point. Thus democracy works!

My earliest platform experiences were gained as a speaker for the Primrose League, a Conservative organization which has rendered valuable service in some parts of the country, although for some reason it never caught on in others.

I was thus brought into contact, when still in my teens, with one of the most vivid personalities of the Victorian age, Lady Dorothy Nevill. She and

her daughter, Miss Meresia Nevill, were Numbers One and Two on the roll of the League and had been instrumental in its foundation.

Lady Dorothy must have been nearly eighty years of age when I first met her, but was nevertheless a keen-witted, vigorous old lady, with decided views on most things which she did not hesitate to express in an outspoken and picturesque manner. She was particularly scathing about the manners and morals of the younger generation. I suppose there never was a time when old people did not have somewhat similar feelings, and especially used she to hold forth on the way in which modern girls (in the early part of the century) played masculine games such as golf and tennis, in short skirts and hobnailed boots, and without any adequate protection for their complexions. And then, as she put it, "after kippring their skins in these pursuits they daub themselves with lipstick and muck".

She herself, to the end of her life, wore a light auburn wig, which suited her very well, and never ventured out of doors without masses of veils—with the result that she had a skin that was smooth and soft and free from wrinkles and entirely untouched by any of the preparations of Max Factor or Elizabeth Arden or whoever were their predecessors in those days. Her house in Charles Street was full of early Victorian furniture, ornaments and knick-knacks, bead mats, shells in glass cases, thick lace antimacassars, tapestry fire-screens, huge vases full of dried leaves, and a thousand and one things that nowadays would only be found in a museum.

Her keen interest in current events, her lively memories of Disraeli, Gladstone, Palmerston and many other figures of a past generation, and the vigour of her comments on current events made her a fascinating personality.

Another "great lady" of a type that seems to have disappeared, whom I also met as a young man, was Lady Jeune (afterwards Lady St. Helier), whose husband was the famous President of the Divorce Court. This gave rise to the *bon mot* as to why marriages in May are unpopular, and the answer was: "Because they come before June" (Jeune).

She entertained extensively, and her "At Homes" were crowded with all the most interesting people in every sphere of human activity; particularly had she a warm corner in her heart for any young man who was attempting to make his way.

Although a somewhat awe-inspiring personality, I have always retained the kindest memories of her, because, although sometimes criticized as a lion-hunter and social climber, she had a generous disposition and was undoubtedly a clever and attractive woman. I remember too one personal act of kindness she did me when, after the death of her husband, she wrote and offered me his Court suit, sword, etc., which he had worn on only one or two occasions. Naturally I accepted with gratitude, and made my first bow at a *levée* thus garbed.

As a result of my early experience with the Primrose League I began to go farther afield, and addressed many political gatherings in the mining areas of the north, in the industrial districts of the midlands and in the sparsely populated agricultural regions of the west country and East Anglia.

But it was not until I was invited to contest the Lowestoft Division of Suffolk in 1922 that I made my *début* as a campaigner on my own behalf, and thus was able to gain experience of electioneering from the point of view of a Parliamentary candidate; a totally different thing. As a candidate,

every speech and every move one makes are sure to be criticized and challenged by political opponents, and it is essential therefore to walk warily. One is no longer a mere visitor from London come to make a political speech and then catch the first train home. One has to identify oneself with the constituency, acquire a knowledge of local conditions and of the idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants and become, as it were, one of themselves. This is not easy for a complete stranger to the district, as I was when first adopted.

When I first went to the Lowestoft Division I had for some months to address two or three meetings a week in every town, hamlet and village of a scattered area measuring about 20 miles by 30, and often had to motor 40 or 50 miles in an evening in order to do so. In some remote places the audience did not consist of more than fifteen or twenty persons, although even this was often a large percentage of the total electorate of the village. Needless to say, some of my experiences were not without their humorous side; particularly at times I suffered some embarrassment—as most public speakers have done—at the hands of my chairman, especially when he happened to be a local inhabitant unaccustomed to the job.

On one occasion I remember being introduced in the following terms:

"In the forthcoming election," announced the chairman, "we shall have an opportunity of hearing some good speakers from London, but for the moment let us listen to our candidate."

In another village to which I was making a return visit, I felt that the chairman might possibly have expressed himself somewhat less ambiguously when he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, some of you have heard our candidate before, others have never heard him before. All I need say to those who have never heard him before is that they will be *extremely pleased when he has finished*."

Then, of course, I came to regard no meeting as complete unless there were present one or two specimens of that political product known as the "heckler". If a speaker ventures on a conflict with one of these, it is essential he should emerge victorious; for if badly scored off it may have a disastrous effect on his political fortunes, whereas a witty retort has often been the means of winning many votes.

A member of my own profession who happened to have a somewhat florid complexion, through no fault of his own, was impertinently asked: "What is it makes your face so red?"

"Blushing at your impudence," was the instantaneous reply, and needless to say it carried the meeting.

In electioneering nothing is more important than a knowledge of the locality and its inhabitants. Careful perusal of the local paper often provides an invaluable opening to an election speech; indeed there have been times when speakers, through ignorance of local conditions or personalities, have been led to make amusing, or it may be embarrassing, blunders.

A good illustration of this was when my father went once to speak at an election meeting at Bolton. In the course of his remarks he criticized Mr. Gladstone for joining the Home Rulers after having tried in vain to make them loyal Unionists, and he said it reminded him of his famous fellow-countryman, Sheridan, who was returning one night from a dinner at which he had dined "not wisely but too well". He was drunk (loud laughter), in fact he was even drunker than usual (great laughter), when he came upon a man lying by the

roadside who was drunker than Sheridan, if that were possible (more loud laughter). The fallen man said: "Help me up; help me up!" Sheridan went over, like the good fellow he was (cheers), and tried to raise the fallen man; but being unable to do so because of his condition (great laughter), hiccupped: "Well, I can't help you up, but shure I'll lie down beside you." (Laughter and cheers lasting several minutes.)

My father felt that, for some reason he could not understand, he had made the hit of his life; but after the meeting was over a man came up to him and explained that his name was Sheridan, that he was an Irishman and was the local doctor, and that in point of fact he was the only Sheridan the audience, who were mostly his patients, had ever heard of in their lives. The worthy doctor's sense of humour, however, enabled him thoroughly to enjoy the joke.

This recalls a somewhat similar incident which happened to myself, when I was called upon to propose a vote of thanks at a Conservative meeting at Yarmouth. The chair was occupied by the President of the Eastern Area, Lord Queenborough, and sitting opposite me on the platform was the Chairman of the Party, Colonel John Gretton, M.P. I concluded my few remarks on a light note, by reminding the audience of an ancient riddle which was said to run as follows: "Who is the happier man: the man with a million of money or the man with nine daughters?" the answer being: "The man with nine daughters, of course, because he does not want any more." This I applied to my own speech, but later in the evening someone mentioned to me that my facetious reference to the two distinguished occupants of the platform had been much appreciated; for of course I must have been aware that Lord Queenborough was the proud father of many daughters, and that Colonel Gretton had recently inherited a million of money or thereabouts from a near relative. In actual truth I did not know either of these facts, but I think perhaps it is as good an incident of a queer coincidence as could be imagined.

In addressing any audience, and especially one suspected of being hostile, it is often useful to commence with an allusion to some local event, a dramatic and startling sentence or a story. This helps to grip their attention and sometimes to gain their goodwill.

There are one or two opening "gambits" which I have used with success on many occasions, such, for instance, as the tale of the temperance lecturer who was anxious to prove to his audience the evils of alcohol. For this purpose he brought to the meeting a large magnifying glass, and, taking a glass of pure water, he showed the audience through the magnifying glass that it was full of animalculae, that horrid-looking things were swimming about in the water. He then took a little drop of whisky and poured it into the glass. As a result these creatures all fell dead to the bottom at once.

"There!" he said. "You see how destructive alcohol is."

But an old woman in the audience immediately exclaimed:

"Thank goodness I saw that; for never again will I drink a drop of water without putting a little whisky in it first!"

I have then gone on to remark that the lecturer brought the magnifying glass to prove that whisky was a bad thing to drink; but he merely succeeded in proving—to the old lady at all events—that it was a good thing. And so it is very often, when we come to examine some of the political problems of the day, so much depends on the particular point of view.

No one who has not been through it can, I think, appreciate the thrill and excitement of a hotly contested Parliamentary election. Some time ago, among the questions put to the B.B.C. Brains Trust was, "How does one get elected to Parliament?", and it was very evident that even the members of this oracular tribunal were extremely hazy about the exact details. It may be of interest, therefore, to outline the procedure, based on my own experience, which can be regarded as typical of all such contests.

As soon as a General Election has been declared or a vacancy created in some other way, a meeting is convened by the local association of each particular party involved, for the purpose of adopting a candidate. Generally there is only one name put forward, as the committee has weeded out the others and made a definite selection for submission to the meeting. But sometimes they have been unable to agree, and the meeting itself may have to decide between two or three aspirants. As soon, however, as the choice has been made, the individual selected is the Conservative, Liberal or Labour candidate, as the case may be, and the real work of the election begins. Each candidate immediately appoints an election agent, if this has not already been done, who acts as his personal representative in the conduct of the election campaign, and on the suitability and capacity of the person selected much depends.

It is a mistake to imagine that elections nowadays are won merely by meetings and speech-making. Organization and tactics are of vital importance, and it is in this connection that a good election agent is worth his weight in gold.

I was fortunate in having an agent, J. F. Coales, who was the epitome of all an agent should be for a mixed working-class constituency such as the Lowestoft Division.

The good political agent is a *rara avis*. It is not a job which, as some people foolishly imagine, can be tackled by anyone. The good agent is really the power behind the throne; he is the chief staff officer in a more or less guerrilla campaign, and even more important than the candidate himself. Not only does he need considerable technical training, but must possess sound political knowledge and be a good mixer, able to make himself welcome at a village sing-song or in the houses of the great. He must have tact, good temper and a strong sense of humour; be ingratiating to the ladies and a "real sport" with the men. He needs, in addition, other qualities not given to everyone, such as a knowledge of human nature, patience, organizing ability, sound judgment and common sense, combined with a capacity at times for complete self-effacement. If he lacks any of these it may mean a loss of hundreds of votes. A candidate is necessarily in the hands of his agent, on whose loyalty and discretion he has to rely implicitly. Certain it is that more elections have been lost and won by the agent than by the candidate.

The next step is to secure premises to serve as headquarters or central committee rooms, and also to appoint sub-agents in each of the outlying wards or districts. And then the fight is on in earnest. The general organization is entrusted to a number of committees, covering finance, transport, meetings, publicity and so forth. Then meetings have to be arranged throughout the whole constituency; this necessitates the hiring of halls, for which there is a good deal of competition between the various parties. In the case of a county division like mine, comprising many small towns and villages, and covering

nearly a hundred square miles, it is essential that the candidate should speak at least once in each of them during the course of the campaign. This meant that we had to try to fit in about a hundred such meetings during the strenuous three weeks or so the campaign lasted. As time passes and the polling day comes nearer, the interest and excitement grow, and from the candidate's point of view life becomes more and more hectic.

Here is an average day.

At 9.30 in the morning or earlier the candidate arrives at his central committee rooms. There he finds awaiting him a pile of correspondence and his agent with all the details of the day's plans. A general staff meeting is then held, at which the heads of all the departments are represented. Meetings, canvassing, publicity, reports from the different areas, the general progress of the election, the provision of motor-cars for polling day and a hundred and one other matters are then considered. When this is over the candidate finds the rest of his morning fully occupied with interviews and with receiving deputations from organizations or groups of electors who wish to stress some particular point of view. In dealing with these a good deal of tact is necessary, as a candidate often has attributed to him considerably greater political power and influence than he possesses, and it is not desirable to disillusion one's potential supporters by seeming too diffident!

No sooner have all these matters been dealt with than the car is at the door, and it is time to rush off and address one or two lunch-hour gatherings at local factories and other centres. Then follow more correspondence, interviews, committees and probably a large public meeting—very often for women only, who find it easier to attend in the afternoon than the evening, and also need a special line of approach.

At five or six o'clock the candidate sets out for his evening's work, which generally consists of four or five meetings in different localities, it may be many miles apart. At each of these he is due to arrive and leave in accordance with a strict schedule, which means that his time at each meeting is limited to twenty minutes or half an hour. As more often than not elections take place in mid-winter, vicissitudes of weather must often be allowed for. In some of the more remote parts of my east-coast constituency I have frequently lost my way owing to fog or mist, have had to scrape the snow off signposts to ascertain my whereabouts, and have had mechanical breakdowns of the car, which by a malevolent chance always seemed to occur in the most isolated places.

Such are some of the less publicized delights of electioneering.

The high spot of the election is, of course, the eve of the poll. Then the oratorical frenzy reaches its climax. In my case we always concluded our campaign with two mass meetings: one at Beccles and the other at Lowestoft. As these places were nearly twenty miles apart the most careful timing was essential. At Beccles I used to open the proceedings with a speech of some half-hour's duration, and then motor to Lowestoft—very often, I am afraid, entirely regardless of speed limits. In order to avoid the possibility of breakdown or delay I was generally preceded by a pilot car to give the news that I was on the way, and followed by a relief car in case anything went wrong. When I got to Lowestoft the meeting had probably been in full swing for an hour or more, and often the audience was extremely vocal and the excitement intense. The hall held some two to three thousand and was packed to the

roof, and there was generally an overflow meeting in the street outside for the many hundreds who had been unable to gain admission. It meant literally fighting one's way through to reach the platform.

An occasion such as this was always an inspiration, although some of these "eve of the poll" meetings were pretty rowdy. One's speech, more often than not, was a rough-and-tumble affair, consisting merely of a final appeal to one's supporters to do their utmost on the morrow. In a sense this was a relief, because a candidate's rhetorical resources are generally exhausted by this time, and with this sort of meeting it was not necessary to worry much about preparing a speech—a few slogans were quite sufficient to begin with, and after that the rest of the evening was very often a fairly hard-hitting contest between the candidate and a number of extremely vocal opponents. Both they and one's supporters enjoyed the heckling to the full. The great point is never to lose one's temper, and to meet every interruption with a smile, trying at the same time to give as good or better than one got.

On the day of the poll there are by custom no further speeches or meetings, as every effort has to be concentrated on getting the electors to the voting booths. In a county constituency considerable transport difficulties are often involved. The hiring of conveyances is prohibited by law, but there is no objection to the lending of private cars for this purpose; and here the Conservative, compared with the Labour candidate, generally has an advantage, as so many of his supporters belong to the wealthier car-owning classes. However, the ballot is secret, and any elector may ask for a lift if he feels like it, without being constrained in any way as to the candidate for whom he votes. At the same time, many of them feel that it is unsporting to ride in an opposition car, and the suggestion has been made that vehicles shall be pooled in some way, and should not bear any distinctive label or colours. Whether this would be practicable I am inclined to doubt. It would certainly be difficult to persuade private individuals to lend their cars and the services of their chauffeurs without the satisfaction of feeling that they were thereby helping their own side.

So far as the candidate is concerned, polling day is spent almost entirely getting into and out of a car. At nine o'clock in the morning, or earlier, he starts off on a carefully arranged tour of the entire constituency, and does not get back until five or six o'clock in the evening. In my case, with a fairly large county division to cover, it meant motoring considerably over a hundred miles in the day, and comprised a visit to every town and village, committee room and principal polling-booth in turn; at each of which I spent a few minutes and spoke a few words of greeting to supporters and friends who had gathered there in anticipation of my arrival. There were some sixty official stopping places *en route*, as well as many other incidental ones; so that I certainly alighted from and re-entered the car at least a hundred and fifty times during the day—a somewhat exhausting effort in itself. In addition, one waved and smiled at every passer-by or group of persons encountered on the road until it became so mechanical a reaction that on one occasion my wife found herself graciously waving to a cow which stuck its head through a gap in a hedge.

A candidate is allowed to enter any polling station, and is therefore able to watch the electors coming in, getting their voting papers and then going off to the little pen to put in the right (or wrong) place the cross upon which one's fate depends. In some instances one has no doubt about how they have voted, for they are more than eager to assure one of having loyally done their bit—indeed sometimes a little more than their bit. I remember one enthusiastic

lady who rushed up to tell me that she had just put a great cross against my name, but she added: "I felt so sorry for the other man, as he was bound to be beaten, that I put a tiny little cross against his name as well." It was so kindly meant that I had not the heart to tell her she had thereby destroyed her ballot paper and that I had lost the vote she was so anxious to give me.

One can usually pick out the opposition without much difficulty, as all one ever gets from them is an averted look or a sour smile. As the day wears on the excitement grows and the voters become more numerous. At every polling station there are representatives of each party waiting outside who try to check up on the voters and by collecting poll-cards form some opinion as to the way things are going. Hourly reports are 'phoned to the Central Committee rooms, where they are collated and a very rough estimate made of the state of the poll; generally, I am bound to say, a good many thousands out on the right or wrong side, as it is so largely guesswork.

By nine o'clock at latest all is over, and as the count—except in a small borough—does not usually take place until the next day, there is nothing for it but to go to bed and await as philosophically as one can what the morrow may bring.

The candidates and also a certain number of their friends are allowed to be present at the count, after they have signed a solemn undertaking not to interfere in any way or to disclose prematurely any information as to how things are going. As a matter of fact, no one is allowed out of the room until the count is complete, so that any leakage is practically impossible. As the proceedings sometimes take several hours it is wise not to go too early and to be well provided with refreshments when you do. After a couple of hours or so one can generally form a pretty good opinion as to the result. The votes are neatly stacked in thousands on the returning officer's table, and as your own piles or those of your opponent mount up, one can read triumph or despair in the eyes of one's friends or supporters. If, however, the result is very close it is often difficult until almost the last minute to be sure who is winning the day. When the count is complete the returning officer announces the figures and we all troop out, and from a convenient window the result is made known to the large and enthusiastic mob gathered outside. Short speeches are then made by the new M.P. For the successful candidate this is easy, and he can afford to be magnanimous, but the loser is also wise to show no bitterness or ill-temper, however poignant and painful may be the grief of his supporters. In other words, it is essentially an occasion for good sportsmanship, and all my opponents except one took their defeat well, and everyone thought much better of them in consequence. After that there is a triumphal and exciting progress back to one's hotel, where there are more speeches to a pandemonium of cheers, shouts and songs. What hand-shaking and pats on the back one receives, and how general is the jubilation and how glad one is to retire at last indoors and sink into an armchair—tired out, but naturally most gratified that it is all successfully over.

In the evening there is generally another big meeting or celebration, which may be a torchlight procession, a dance or a concert, at which the new Member is the centre of interest. It is perhaps not to be wondered at, therefore, that as early as possible the next morning he slips away from his constituency, relieved, to get back to normality, and to be free for a time from the ceaseless glare of the limelight in which for the past three weeks he has spent every hour of his waking existence.

I dare say many people may wonder—in view of all this—why anyone should willingly undergo such an extremely trying experience. And yet it has its compensations, in spite of the trials of mind, temper, body and purse which are involved. At all events, speaking for myself, I enjoyed every election in which I took part; but of course in each of them I felt fairly confident as to the result, and never had the unpleasant experience of being a defeated candidate. If I had been, it might have altered considerably my point of view.

Taken as a whole, an election today is comparatively orderly and peaceful and a much less costly affair than it was fifty years ago before the introduction of the secret ballot. Furthermore, there have been many other improvements, notably that, since the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, open bribery of individuals has largely disappeared, although there still exist other more subtle forms of political "influence".

In the old days the state of affairs was almost unbelievable, and some of the East Anglian constituencies in particular acquired an unsavoury reputation. The neighbouring Division to mine, Great Yarmouth, was disfranchised on several occasions, and an election petition was almost a matter of course.

In the famous "Spendthrift Election", fought in Northampton in 1768, three great lords—the Earl of Northampton, Earl Spencer and the Earl of Halifax—each put forward and financed a candidate, with the result that, although the total electorate was only 930, no less than £400,000 was spent—equivalent to probably double that amount at present-day valuation.

Needless to say, there was a petition, and the election was declared null and void; whilst the noble lords who engaged in this mad political rivalry found themselves well-nigh ruined.

Bribery on such a wholesale scale is now fortunately a thing of the past; but even so an election is generally regarded as a windfall by many local tradesmen and others who find in it an opportunity for rendering various services, such as billposting, hiring cars and halls and so forth, and insisting on a scale of remuneration which can only be described as "generous".

Electioneering tactics too are of a very different and more subtle kind than was the case in the past.

In this country we have embarked on the greatest political experiment ever undertaken by any democracy; I mean, of course, the system of universal suffrage, completed a few years ago by the so-called "flapper vote". We have now reached the stage when every man and woman possesses a direct voice in the government of the country—not by reason of any property or educational qualifications, but simply because they happen to have been born British citizens and have reached the mature age of twenty-one.

The majority of them have no fixed political ideas, and are prepared to support any political party or candidate who happens to appeal to them at the moment. The existence of this large, unattached floating vote without any definite political principles obviously possesses dangers against which we need, as a nation, to be constantly on our guard.

Owing to the size of the modern electorate, in most constituencies individual canvassing has almost disappeared. During the three weeks of an election campaign it is no longer possible to call upon more than a handful of the 40,000 to 50,000 electors comprising the average constituency. Indeed, it is sometimes resented when one does call. Not only is one apt to be indignantly reminded that the ballot is secret, but other embarrassments occasionally arise.

In one of my election campaigns an attractive young lady endeavoured to

solicit the vote of the master of the house. His wife answered the door and suspiciously inquired what the young lady wanted of her husband.

"Oh," she said, "I have only called to try and find out what Party he belongs to."

"I'm the party he belongs to, and you had better not forget it," answered the good woman, slamming the door in her face.

And now let me add a word or two on the sordid question of finance. If it is difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven it is even more difficult for a poor one to embark upon a political career if he happens to belong to the Conservative Party. There has, however, been an improvement in recent years, and many constituencies are no longer quite so rapacious as in the past. All the same, the excessive cost of fighting an election and the almost unlimited financial demands that are often made upon candidates and Members of Parliament still constitute a considerable scandal. In the past the Conservative Party has undoubtedly been the chief offender. It is many years since Mr. Baldwin denounced in the strongest terms the practice of selling seats to the highest bidder—for that is what it amounts to—and pointed out what a bad thing it is, even from the constituency's point of view, because it means that the range of choice is limited by financial considerations to about five per cent of otherwise potentially suitable candidates.

I can only speak, of course, from my own experience, but I believe it is fairly typical. Although the amount a candidate can spend is limited by law and depends upon the size of the electorate, it works out in the case of the average constituency at about £1,000, and this does not include the candidate's personal expenses and certain other items that do not come within the specified limitations. Nor, of course, is the pre-election expenditure of the candidate—when "nursing the constituency"—taken into account. For instance, from the time I became prospective candidate for the Lowestoft Division in February 1922 until my election the following October, my candidature, including actual election expenses, cost me the best part of £2,000. No doubt a good deal of this was due to my ignorance and inexperience; but nevertheless four subsequent elections which were conducted on far more economical lines satisfied me that it is practically impossible for a Conservative candidate to fight an election to the satisfaction of his supporters if he spends much less than the full amount allowed by law. Although, in every election after the first, I received assistance from the Party funds, the strain on my limited financial resources was considerable. Yet I am convinced that much of this expenditure is unnecessary; and the proof is that none of my opponents ever felt it incumbent on them to spend much more than half what the election cost me. To my mind this constitutes a grave anomaly, and one that strikes at the very roots of democracy itself. If the democratic system is to survive and flourish, its units and individual electors must realize that political rights involve political responsibilities and duties; that democracy involves sacrifices as well as benefits, giving as well as receiving, hard fighting as well as cheering. In other words, we have to get rid of the accepted tradition that a contested election costs a Conservative candidate so much more than his Liberal or Labour opponents. I do not believe the general public has the least idea of these financial burdens, or of the abuses arising from the present system. Yet the fact remains that the cost is quite prohibitive for many a promising man whose presence in the House of Commons would be of immense benefit to the Conservative Party.

The day is bound to come when constituencies will have to find the election expenses, as well as run their organization, and there should really be no difficulty about it. In my own case, although in five elections my majorities varied between 12,000 and 2,000—which was indicative of fairly violent swings in political feeling—I came to the conclusion, from an analysis of the figures, that there were some ten or twelve thousand electors who were so fixed in their Conservative principles and beliefs that they would vote Conservative under all circumstances. If, therefore, these electors who were so unswerving in their loyalty to the Conservative Party had been willing to contribute on average 2s. a year—less than halfpenny a week—to the Party funds, we should have had no difficulty whatever in paying our way and providing for all reasonable contingencies. Certainly our opponents did a great deal more than that. If the practice were to become general that each constituency should be financially self-supporting, so far from being a hardship, it would found an enormous source of strength, and add immensely to the general interest and enthusiasm of the electors, who would then feel that they were really running their own show.

It is, of course, not unknown for ambitious politicians to be financed by some industry or corporation, in order that they may enter the House of Commons and act as their spokesman in that assembly. But nothing is more likely to undermine the prestige of Parliament and the independence of Members of Parliament than that they should be labelled as the mouthpiece of any organization, however powerful.

I know as a fact of many constituencies where the prospective candidate has been required to promise an annual contribution to his Association of £1,500 or £2,000, in addition to paying the whole of his election expenses, and subscribing *ad lib.* to every hospital charity, cricket club, bowls club, football club, tennis club, and similar institutions throughout the division. Indeed, something of this kind, though on a smaller scale, I admit is the rule rather than the exception—with the result that a political career is often beyond the means of an otherwise eligible young man. If, however, the Conservative Party is to survive with its strength unimpaired, this waste of material cannot be allowed to continue.

From an electioneering point of view, the period from 1927 to 1931 was the busiest of my political life. I had then been a Member of Parliament for some years, and was fairly well known as a platform speaker: indeed, perhaps I might claim to have been a bit of a "star turn". At all events, from 1927 onwards I was addressing large meetings on an average once or twice a week in every part of the country; and during the ensuing four years I visited 300 constituencies in England and Wales, which I believe is something of a record.

This meant, of course, that I had very largely to let my practice at the Bar go; but that did not trouble me much at the time, as my ideas were fixed more or less on a political career, and I was also engaged in certain business activities. On the recommendation of a Parliamentary friend, Sir Berkeley Sheffield, I had been appointed independent Chairman of the British Ironfounders' Association, the trade organization of the light castings industry, a position which I should doubtless have held to this day if it had not been for the disastrous financial crisis of 1931. At all events, it opened up for me a new field of activity, and taught me much about industrial problems and difficulties.

Perhaps the most pleasurable feature of these political peregrinations was the hospitality extended to me in the various localities I visited. In particular I was from time to time a guest in some of the so-called "stately homes of England", and was thereby afforded a fleeting glimpse into a world of privilege which is rapidly disappearing, even if it has not already gone. Crippling taxation and changed conditions are making it impossible for most of these great houses and estates to be maintained any longer in private ownership. Many of them have been closed down and are falling into decay; others have been transformed into schools and public institutions, and the few which still remain with their original owners have become mere shadows of themselves and their glory is departed. The family, it may be, still continue to reside there, but most of the rooms are closed and the furniture under dust-sheets; it seems only a matter of time before they too go the way of the rest. How could it be otherwise in these days, when it is practically impossible for anyone to have a net income of more than about five thousand a year, after deduction of income tax, surtax and making some provision for death duties?

But there is no doubt that, for the so-called privileged classes of the late Victorian and Edwardian days, life was very delightful, and possessed a spaciousness, dignity and elegance which has perhaps never been surpassed in any age or country.

It may be true that many of these people lived in a world of their own, and concerned themselves but little with the deplorable economic conditions of their less fortunate fellow-countrymen. Nevertheless they set a standard of courtesy, social behaviour and culture of a kind which is now almost extinct. Moreover, occupying as they did a firm and unassailable social position, they were able to be easy, natural and courteous to an extent that is sometimes difficult for those less securely placed. To be a guest in some of these great houses, surrounded by all the amenities of unlimited wealth and luxury, was a delightful and unforgettable experience for anyone unaccustomed to such things.

Among the houses I remember best was stately Bowood, in Wiltshire. the ancestral home of many generations of Lansdownes. Bowood is a vast mansion in the Italian style, with an annexe 300 feet long, which is said to be a copy of a wing of Diocletian's palace at Spalato. The view from my bedroom window was truly magnificent, overlooking a lake, a wood and the distant downs. Many of the most famous personalities of the past have been entertained at Bowood: Dr. Johnson, Talleyrand, Mirabeau, Mme de Staël, Lord Macaulay, Benjamin Franklin, David Garrick, Thomas Moore, who wrote "All that makes life worth living is at lovely Bowood", Lord Chesterfield, Jeremy Bentham, and a host of others.

Then there was Burghley House "by Stamford Town", the seat of the Marquis of Exeter, and one of the most magnificent private houses in England; full of priceless pictures, sculpture and other treasures. It is so enormous that it took me nearly ten minutes to find the way from my room to the library, where the house-party forgathered for dinner. It is easy to understand how overwhelming it must have seemed to the "Village Maiden" of Tennyson's poem when she arrived there as the bride of that "Lord of Burghley" who, without disclosing his identity and in the guise of a landscape painter, had wooed her and won her heart. In order to accustom her by degrees to the grandeur that was to be hers, he suggested that on their honeymoon they should see some of "those handsome houses where the wealthy nobles dwell"; and he

showed her one great mansion after another. But they made little impression upon her, for her simple mind was fixed upon that cottage home where she believed that she and her lover were to pass their days. Then, finally, they arrived at Burleigh, and she

Sees a mansion more majestic
Than all those she saw before;
Many a gallant gay domestic
Bows before him at the door.
And they speak in gentle murmur,
When they answer to his call,
While he treads with footstep firmer,
Leading on from hall to hall.
And, while now she wonders blindly,
Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly,
"All of this is mine and thine."
Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he.
All at once the colour flushes
Her sweet face from brow to chin:
As it were with shame she blushes,
And her spirit changed within.

And so it was. She, poor girl, had set her heart on love in a cottage, and such magnificence was too much for her simple spirit; and so, "before her time she died". But not before she had done her duty by providing an heir; for, as the poet says: "Three fair children first she bore him". A portrait of this particular Lady Burghley, who was, I believe, great-grandmother of the present Marquis of Exeter, hangs in one of the rooms. It is easy to understand why the young lord was captivated, for she must have been a very sweet and lovely girl. The present Lord Burghley, so well known as an athlete, was a colleague of mine in the House of Commons.

Other places I remember well were: Lympne, Sir Philip Sassoon's mansion near Folkestone, which he himself had extended and decorated with exotic and truly oriental magnificence, the garden in particular, from which one could look straight across the English Channel, was superb: it was here that many important conferences, attended by Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Foch, Orlando and other Allied statesmen, were held during the First World War; Shillinglee, Lord Winterton's residence in Sussex, full of "old Masters" and other artistic treasures; Brocket Hall, Hertfordshire, where two of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers—Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston—lived for many years; Apethorpe Hall, where I once occupied a room in which both Charles II and James II are reputed to have slept; Heveningham Hall, Suffolk, the seat of my Parliamentary neighbour and friend, Lord Huntingfield, with a frontage that seemed almost as long as that of Buckingham Palace; Croxton Park, Bedfordshire, which belonged to another old Parliamentary friend, Sir Douglas Newton (later Lord Eltisley), where he had a fine model farm, being himself a practical agriculturist of wide knowledge and experience—these are only a few of the historic houses taken at random in which I stayed from time to time.

In 1928 I had an amusing brush with Sir Herbert Samuel (now Lord Samuel) when I went to address a meeting for my friend Sir Frank Sanderson, who was his Conservative opponent at Darwin. Sir Herbert had made a speech the

night before, in which he had referred to the halcyon years immediately preceding the war of 1914-18, when the country had the inestimable advantage (*sic*) of a Liberal administration.

I was told I must reply to this, so I ventured to challenge him by pointing out, *inter alia*, that those years of "glorious" Liberal government had at all events plunged Ireland into chaos; produced a deplorable housing shortage, as a result of the Lloyd George Land Tax; and finally, at the outbreak of war, had left us involved in a life-and-death struggle with our defensive forces reduced to the point of danger, and even the British Navy inadequately equipped for such an emergency, according to the evidence of Lord Jellicoe himself. This last allegation apparently struck home, for Sir Herbert immediately wrote off to Lord Jellicoe and inquired whether he had ever said that the Navy was unprepared for war, which, of course, I had never alleged. He received a reply, which was published in all the Liberal newspapers as a crushing refutation of my mendacious assertions, partisan imagination, etc. But whether it was so, or only strengthened my suggestion that the Navy was inadequately prepared, I leave others to judge.

The letter was as follows:

80, Portland Place, W.1.
10. II. 28.

Dear Sir Herbert Samuel,

Thank you for your letter of the 9th inst. I have certainly never made any such statement as that attributed to me.

I have mentioned in my two books, of course, certain matters which resulted from the necessity of keeping down pre-war estimates; such, for instance, as the destroyer question and light cruisers. I have spoken of the partial inefficiency of our armoured shell, as compared with the German shell; and there are other passages in my books where I point out defects in material which the war brought to light. But to insist that I made a reflection on the preparedness of the Navy for war was without foundation.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) Jellicoe.

As a matter of fact, Lord Jellicoe refers over and over again in his book, *The Grand Fleet*, to the shortage of destroyers, the lack of armour-piercing shell and the disadvantageous position of Scapa Flow; deficiencies in the mine-laying and submarine services and other similar defects, for which it was difficult to see how a Government which held office during the previous eight years could escape responsibility.

Although Sir Herbert, in the stress of the election, worked himself up into a great state of indignation, it was, of course, all part of the game; and he was most friendly when we met later in the House of Commons, and as Home Secretary in 1932 offered me the appointment of a Metropolitan magistrate, which I later accepted from his successor, Sir John Gilmour.

In 1927 I had another heated controversy, this time with my own Liberal opponent, arising out of allegations freely made at the time, in the Press and elsewhere, regarding the "sale of honours".

During the years immediately after the war of 1914-18 there is not much doubt that this traffic in honours attained the proportion of a bad scandal. Not a great deal was heard about it, because all parties were more or less suspect. The line is an extremely fine one between awarding an honour in recognition of

definite public and political services—which may, of course, in certain instances include financial generosity to Party funds—and the “sale” of such honours, which, of course, implies something in the nature of a preliminary bargain.

During the period of Mr. Lloyd George’s administration, however, this traffic in honours—ostensibly a recognition of public services during the war—grew to unprecedented proportions, so much so that even Lord Rosebery, an ex-Liberal Prime Minister himself, publicly protested. Indeed, it was openly stated that approaches were made to wealthy men all over the country, and that there was a kind of recognized tariff for these things, ranging from £10,000 for a knighthood to £100,000 or more in the case of a peerage. A wealthy constituent of mine told me he had had an offer from one of these so-called and often self-appointed “agents” of a peerage for £100,000, and I myself was pressed by another individual to approach the powers that be on his behalf, in order that he might obtain a knighthood in return for a gift of £10,000 to the Party funds.

At length the scandal reached such a pitch that even a moderate, non-political paper like the *Banker* was constrained to write that many of those who had secured such honours were “coarse, illiterate profiters; doubtful in their reputations; vulgar in their lives, who, to the shame of honour and decency, were shovelled into the House of Lords or created baronets or knights merely upon the strength of the money they had obtained by preying upon their country in the most awful crisis of its affairs”.

Indeed, the traffic in honours was so widespread that in some instances it began to assume the appearance of a vast fraud. There are authentic cases—I was myself professionally engaged in one of them—where prospective recipients were induced to part with thousands of pounds to people who had no power whatever to influence the conferring of an honour, and who could not even lay claim to any connection with the Government. Nothing was safer or more lucrative, for the vanity of the victims kept them as a rule from making the matter public.

It is told of one millionaire that, in order to safeguard himself and ensure that he would actually receive the coveted title, he signed the cheque which represented his share of the transaction with the name of the title he was hoping to assume; a clever move, for the cheque could not, of course, be cashed until the honour was conferred.

Personally, I should like to see the abolition of all hereditary titles. The only value of a title to my mind is that it constitutes a recognition of some public service; and I can find little justification for the practice of handing down titles in perpetuity which ultimately pass to those who have done nothing to win or deserve them. At all events, the “sale” of honours has largely been got rid of because nowadays every recommendation has first of all to be scrutinized by an independent committee of the Privy Council. It is I think also a pity that those who are elevated to the peerage for “distinguished public services” should be so ready to abandon the names under which they earned their distinction and adopt fanciful patronymics entirely obscuring and destroying their identity.

Why should men who have been known for years to the public and their friends as Henry Betterton, George Penny, Herwald Ramsbotham, Wedgwood Benn, Victor Warrender and many others consider it desirable to disguise themselves as Rushcliffe, Marchwood, Soulbury, Stansgate, and so forth? How

much more convenient and appropriate if it were customary to retain the names of their birth, as Lord Russell (of Killowen), Lord Carson, Lord Simon, Lord Balfour, Lord Snowden, Lord Samuel, Earl Haig and innumerable others have done!

CHAPTER V

TWELVE YEARS AN M.P. (I)

My election to the House of Commons in the autumn of 1922 was due to a curious chance. I had long cherished political ambitions, but had little hope or expectation of their speedy fulfilment until one day early in 1922 my wife read out to me the following oddly worded communication in the *Daily Mail*:

"Should this letter catch the eye of an honest broad-minded imperialist, who is prepared to put his country before his party and to pay his own election expenses; who would scorn to be a mere monkey-on-a-stick to the Central Office of the Conservative Party; who has the pluck to refuse merely to raise his hand in voting every time at the imperious dictation of the leaders of the party in power, without due regard to his own conscience or those whom he represents—then let him hasten to the Lowestoft Division of Suffolk, where an almost certain and safe seat is going a'begging for the asking."

Without any very serious intention, I replied to this strange and ingenuous appeal, offering my services; but as I heard nothing further forgot all about it.

Some weeks passed, and then one morning I received a *postcard* inviting me to visit Lowestoft and discuss the matter with a committee. Although still a trifle sceptical, I did so; and the upshot of the interview so casually arranged was that, almost before I could turn round, I found myself adopted as prospective Conservative anti-Coalition candidate for the Division.

Although I had surmounted the first hurdle thus unexpectedly, my prospects could hardly be called rosy, for at that time Mr. Lloyd George was still in the saddle as Prime Minister, with all the immense glamour of his war-time prestige, and supported by most of the "first-class brains" (to quote Lord Birkenhead) of the Conservative Party and the whole weight of the Party machine. Indeed, I was solemnly warned by the chief agent of the Party, Sir Malcolm Fraser, that I could expect no official assistance or support, pledged as I was to the overthrow of the Coalition and the return to power of a purely Conservative administration. However, I was not much daunted, as there were signs all over the country that the Coalition was cracking up, and other constituencies were doing the same as the Lowestoft Division—in refusing to bow the knee to candidates foisted on them from outside, and whose political views were often directly opposed to those of the majority of the electors. Sir Malcolm Fraser himself seemed to recognize that it was an impossible situation and one that was causing deep resentment.

Nevertheless, for the first eight months, whilst nursing the constituency, I was an outcast from the fold. I could get no one to come and speak for me, and had to rely entirely on my own efforts and those of my local supporters. I was therefore very grateful for the assistance of one or two "Independents" like Sir Thomas Polson (Dover's and the *Daily Mail's* Anti-Waste M.P.) and Admiral Adair, M.P., a "Die-hard" Conservative who, by some weird electoral fluke, had been elected in 1918 for one of the "Reddest" divisions of Glasgow. Otherwise we had to depend entirely on our own resources. Fortunately,

however, many of the committee who had given me their support were extremely popular locally with the rank and file, and carried more weight than any visitor—however distinguished—could have done.

The Lowestoft Division is what may be described as a "Fish and Chip" constituency. Its two main interests are fishing and agriculture, although in the town of Lowestoft there is a largish population of hotel, boarding-house and apartment-house keepers, dependent on the summer holiday traffic. In addition, scattered about the constituency are a number of important factories, such as Maconochie & Co., the C.W.S. works and J. W. Brooke & Sons, Ltd., the famous marine engineers, all of these in Lowestoft itself; the United Bus Service Construction Works and the Oxford Press printing works of William Clowes, Ltd., at Beccles; and at Bungay another important firm of printers—William Clay & Co., Ltd.

These industrial activities are insignificant, however, in comparison with the two interests above mentioned. It is therefore essential for anyone who seeks to represent this particular constituency in the House of Commons to pay special attention to the problems of agriculture and fishing. Of the two, the latter is probably the more important from the standpoint of local politics; indeed, in former years the votes of the fishermen were decisive in a Parliamentary election. But whilst this was not the case in my time, owing to the extended franchise, it was clear that any candidate would have a poor chance of success unless he had obtained the support and goodwill of the fishing community. In every one of my Parliamentary contests it was, therefore, a great satisfaction to me to walk round the fish markets and find that they were "blue" from end to end. It was very rare to discover a single office on any of the quays that was not displaying my colours and handbills.

The deep-sea fisherman is a Conservative by nature and temperament. He dislikes rapid changes and newfangled experiments. So far as politics are concerned, what was good enough for his father and grandfather is good enough for him, however much he may grouse and grumble sometimes at "them there politicians" and feel himself neglected, as indeed he often has been. Nevertheless he is not going to jump out of the frying-pan into the fire or lightly change his inherited convictions; and with this type of man it is not easy for the agitator and the revolutionary to make much headway; he is not interested in their political jargon; he distrusts their promises and refuses to be hustled. He prefers to carry on with his job in a quiet, unassuming, uncomplaining and heroic manner, and only asks for a fair deal and no favour so far as his own industry is concerned.

There is no class of man for whom I have a greater admiration. An unpolished diamond he may be—rough of speech, uncouth in manners, simple-minded, unlettered and largely inarticulate—but nevertheless brave, honest and kindly; a man you instinctively trust and who would scorn to play you a dirty trick or go back upon his word.

The lives of these fishermen are hard, none more so, and when they go out in their little ships to raise a scanty livelihood from the depths of the sea they take their lives in their hands; but they do not make a song about it—it is all in the day's work. For some years it was my privilege to be a member of the Committee of Management of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and at every meeting we had reports of deeds of heroism unequalled even in time of war done by these same fishermen who, in addition to their other work, man the

lifeboats round our coasts. This is indeed a work of mercy and humanity, for which they volunteer and carry out without promise or expectation of material reward except an occasional small bonus.

In war-time these fishing-boats leave behind them their nets and tackle and sweep the seas for the explosive mines with which the waters are strewn. Many thousands of the men have lost their lives in this dangerous enterprise; but again it is merely part of the day's work. There is no compliment I ever appreciated more than when one of these boats was christened with my name; and it was a deep source of pride to know that somewhere round our coasts during the war *H.M.S. Gervais Rentoul* was playing a small but valuable part in keeping the sea lanes safe for our shipping and supplies.

In the social and political life of the Lowestoft Division, which he himself represented for many years, the leading figure in my time was the late Lord Somerleyton. He was certainly a very good friend to me; always ready with shrewd advice drawn from his long political experience; never sparing of himself if he thought he could be of assistance; constantly prepared to offer the lavish hospitality of Somerleyton Hall to distinguished visitors, or assist our cause in any other way. In every respect he was a tower of strength, and I cannot exaggerate the debt of gratitude I owe to him for many public and private acts of kindness.

Before being raised to the peerage as the first Baron Somerleyton, he was even better known as Sir Savile Crossley, who had inherited a large fortune from his father and grandfather, derived from the famous family business of Crossley & Son, carpet manufacturers, of Halifax. Being thus relieved from the necessity of earning a livelihood for himself, he was able to devote himself to politics. Ultimately he became Chief Whip of the Liberal-Unionist Party, and was Joseph Chamberlain's right-hand man throughout the whole of his Tariff Reform campaign.

His country seat at Somerleyton, about ten miles from Lowestoft, from which he took his title, was a princely place and was kept up as few country houses are nowadays. It was full of priceless furniture, books and pictures, and there was every sign of abundant wealth. I remember that for one picture alone, hanging in the dining-room, Lord Somerleyton told me he had been offered £35,000.

He was always the perfect host, and had the reputation of being the most courteous of men. My father used to tell an amusing story about his first visit to Somerleyton many years before, when he went to speak at a meeting there in the Conservative interest and was entertained for the night by Sir Savile Crossley. On that occasion he and his host sat up until 4 a.m. because each of them was too polite to go to bed. My father had the idea that it was for the host to make the first move towards retiring, and was therefore determined to wait for some such indication; whereas Lord Somerleyton knew that this was the privilege of the guest—the idea being that the host should hold himself entirely at the guest's disposal. As a result, while each was waiting for the other to take the initiative for hour after hour, they engaged in desultory conversation, occasionally falling asleep from sheer weariness. Finally my father, with profuse apologies, suggested that he really must get some rest as he had an early train to catch, with which suggestion his long-suffering host readily agreed.

I had myself a small instance of Lord Somerleyton's tact and courtesy when

there was a large house-party at Somerleyton Hall for some political gathering, and among those invited to lunch were a local Mayor and Mayoress. When the dessert stage was reached, plates were placed before us upon which were finger-bowls resting upon valuable lace mats. The Mayoress, who was sitting next to our host with my wife on his other side, was evidently unused to such refinements, and failed to remove the mat from her plate before taking a ripe peach, which she cut on the mat, thereby ruining it completely. Our host immediately whispered to my wife: "Please do the same; I do not want her to feel embarrassed if she happens to notice her mistake." A charming instance of real courtesy and consideration for the feelings of others.

And now to digress for just a moment. As a prospective Parliamentary candidate there were minor perils which I did not anticipate. Here, for example, is one of them. Shortly after my adoption I was sitting in my chambers one morning, when my clerk informed me that a gentleman from Lowestoft had called and was anxious to see me. Thereupon a prosperous-looking, well-dressed man of about fifty entered the room. Apologizing profusely for intruding, he said he had lived in Lowestoft for many years, was a keen Conservative, and tactfully explained that he was most desirous to meet one who very soon was sure to be the M.P. for the Division. After this highly encouraging beginning, he referred to several prominent local people by name, whom he suggested I must have met, and gave me a good deal of alleged gossip about the district. After a quarter of an hour or so of general conversation, he came to what I subsequently realized was the real purpose of his visit. He stated that he was a local bookseller with a shop at the corner of Surrey Street, one of the few streets with which I was vaguely familiar, as it was there that the Conservative Club—where my adoption had taken place—was situated. He then remarked that, in his business, he made a speciality of bookbinding, for which from time to time he purchased skins and other suitable material in different parts of the country. That morning he had unexpectedly been offered a parcel at a bargain price, but most unfortunately had not brought sufficient money with him! Could I therefore come to his assistance? He would of course send me a cheque next day, on his return to Lowestoft, as he did not happen to have his cheque-book with him. Faced with this unexpected request, I rapidly thought to myself: "This man may be, and probably is, a fraud, although he seems genuine enough; and if he is genuine and I refuse to help him I shall lose a valuable potential supporter, who may do me a lot of harm locally." It sounds foolish, I admit, but in the end he went off with five pounds of my money, and needless to say I never saw or heard of him again.

And now for the sequel. Some years later I was talking to a friend in the smoke-room of the House of Commons, when he happened to remark:

"Everyone gets 'done' once or twice in his life. I had a man call on me shortly after I was adopted as candidate, a most respectable man who said he was a local bookseller."

"Yes," I interrupted, "I know, and he wanted to buy skins. How much did he 'skin' you for?"

"Ten pounds." But my friend went on to say that he reported the matter to Scotland Yard, where he was told that the police were searching for this ingenious gentleman all over the country. Many prospective M.P.s had been victimized; and his story was always the same, supported by a good deal of local knowledge which must have been somewhat difficult to obtain. On the

whole I felt he almost deserved the money for the ingenuity and artistry with which he acted his part. Of course, at a later date, I should probably have been sufficiently well informed to trip him up over some detail; but as it was he had chosen the psychological moment, and doubtless relied on my almost complete ignorance of the locality and its inhabitants, and my desire to ingratiate myself with one whom I hoped would be a constituent and supporter. I never heard whether he was caught: I believe not.

And so, as already explained, for many months I played a lone hand. But shortly before the General Election the famous Carlton Club meeting was held, and the Coalition brought to an end, although at the cost of a serious split in the Conservative ranks. As a result, however, I received during the actual contest all possible assistance from official quarters, and we achieved a smashing success.

My opponents in this first election were Mr. (afterwards Sir) Brograve Beauchamp, the son of the retiring member, Sir Edward Beauchamp, who as a Liberal had represented the Division since 1910; and Mr. Robert Mellanby, a local baker, who stood in the Labour interest. Under the terms of the party truce it had been arranged behind the scenes that the seat was to be allocated to the Liberals, and my intervention upset the apple-cart, especially as it was fairly clear from the early days of the campaign that I was winning. However, I doubt whether at that time Beauchamp's heart was in the job or whether he had any very definite political convictions at all. At all events, some years later, after his marriage to Lady Evelyn Herbert, he became a Conservative and joined me as a colleague in the House of Commons.

I thoroughly enjoyed that first election, as indeed I did each of my four subsequent ones. However great the strain, the excitement and enthusiasm carry one through, and there is something about a fight that appeals to every normally constituted man. The contest was agreeable for other reasons as well. Both my opponents were "gentlemen" in the true sense of the word, and we were able therefore to avoid personalities and unpleasant incidents of any kind.

And certainly for a newcomer like myself, with no local connections—a "foreigner", to use the accepted Lowestoft term—who had to create an organization out of nothing and familiarize himself with all the varied interests of a large County Division, the result was a glorious victory. The figures were:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|--------|
| G. Rentoul (C.) | .. | .. | 14,154 |
| B. Beauchamp (Nat. Lib.) | .. | .. | 6,205 |
| R. Mellanby (Lab.) | .. | .. | 4,511 |
| Conservative majority | | | 7,949 |

which meant that not only had I received more votes than both my opponents combined, but had won by the largest majority ever accorded to any candidate up to that time in the history of the constituency.

Outside the Town Hall, awaiting the result, was a vast crowd of many thousands, most of whom had been there for some hours. When the announcement was made by the Town Clerk, Mr. R. B. Nicholson, the enthusiasm baffled description. I was drawn in triumph to my hotel; and in the evening there was a torchlight procession of over a mile in length.

I therefore made my first bow to the Speaker as a Member of the Parliament which assembled in the autumn of 1922, when a Conservative Government took office after the collapse of the Lloyd George Coalition. This followed, as already stated, the famous meeting at the Carlton Club, which first brought Mr. Baldwin into the public eye.

Mr. Bonar Law, who had been primarily responsible for the overthrow of the Coalition, accepted the Premiership, although with considerable reluctance, as it was known both to himself and to his intimate friends that he was a dying man. Having been warned by his doctor that he could not hope to stand the strain for more than a few months, he made a definite stipulation that he should be permitted to resign at any moment if in the opinion of his medical advisers it was unwise for him to continue.

Consequently from the start it was obvious he was only a stop-gap Premier, and indeed a very sick man. This was in itself a serious handicap to the Government, especially as most of the tried and experienced administrators, such as Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Sir Robert Horne and many others conceived it to be their duty to remain loyal to their defeated chief, Mr. Lloyd George. In the new Government almost the only man besides Bonar Law who had previously held office was Stanley Baldwin, and he became Chancellor of the Exchequer almost as a matter of course. But to the man in the street Mr. Baldwin's name was practically unknown, and he was in ability and capacity entirely untried. This meant, of course, an additional burden on Mr. Bonar Law; and it was certainly not unexpected when in a few months his health compelled his resignation after one of the shortest Premierships in history.

The problem then arose: who was to succeed him as Prime Minister and Leader of the House? The choice lay between Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Baldwin. From many points of view the claims of Lord Curzon were paramount, but there was one fatal objection: he was not a member of the House of Commons. It shows how times have changed since the days of Melbourne, Chatham, Beaconsfield and Salisbury, for by general consent it was agreed that it would be out of harmony with democratic ideas for the Prime Minister to be other than a member of the Lower House. Even Lord Curzon, in spite of most bitter personal disappointment, came reluctantly to accept this point of view: indeed, it was an open secret that the King himself played no small part in influencing the decision.

A meeting of the Party, at which I was present, was held in April 1923 in the grand hall of the Hotel Cecil. Lord Curzon himself took the chair, and with immense magnanimity, and in most felicitous terms, proposed Mr. Baldwin for election to the Party leadership which carried with it the Premiership. Thus it came about that a man who was almost unknown six months previously, inexperienced and untried, became Prime Minister of Great Britain at a time of immense difficulty both at home and abroad. Well might he declare at such a juncture that he wanted prayers rather than cheers. He seemed to have few, if any, qualifications for the job. For nearly fourteen years, until appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, he had been a rank and file Member, quiet, inoffensive and unassuming, and without having made any special mark or apparently betrayed any particular aptitude or flair for the game of politics. He was known to be full of shrewd common sense and to have had considerable business experience in connection with the affairs of the great firm with which his name and that of his family were associated. He was a familiar figure in the smoking-room and was

generally well liked, but no one saw in him at the time a future Prime Minister. At both Harrow and Cambridge he had had an undistinguished career, and there was a popular story in circulation about him that an old school friend met him travelling in an Underground train shortly after he was appointed Premier. After the usual greetings the friend said to him:

"Baldwin, it is years since we met. *What are you doing with yourself now?*"

When, therefore, Mr. Baldwin became leader of the Party and Prime Minister it was a case of *faute de mieux*. His greatest asset was that he was believed to be straight and to have no axe to grind; he was, moreover, an Englishman and not a Celt. Being hitherto quite unknown, he had nothing to live down, and his very lack of showy qualities in personality, temperament or intellect constituted no small part of his appeal to the man in the street. After so much political strategy, scheming and wire-pulling by Mr. Lloyd George, the people of Britain for the most part turned instinctively and gratefully to a man who was the very reverse. Mr. Baldwin therefore took office with a considerable measure of popularity and goodwill; and, in spite of the problems still outstanding, the summer adjournment of 1923 found the new Government fairly well in the saddle. The 1922 election had been fought and won by Mr. Bonar Law on perhaps the most amazing political programme ever put before the country, for there was absolutely nothing in it, and it could be summed up in the one word "tranquillity". After the hectic years of war and the immediate post-war period this idea sounded most attractive, although unfortunately it has never yet been realized, and it is doubtful whether it ever will be on this side of the grave.

However, Mr. Baldwin was wisely content for the time being to amble along on the same lines. His personal popularity grew enormously in a few short months; and although in the House of Commons his shortcomings and inexperience as a political leader were painfully obvious even to those of us who were ourselves new to the game, and his speeches seemed for the most part to be lamentably lacking in that punch and drive to be expected from a party chief and head of a Government—nevertheless Mr. Baldwin was liked and admired by the rank and file of the Party, so many of whom were Members of Parliament for the first time.

When therefore we separated for the holidays in July 1923, it was with no thought in any of our minds of another General Election. The Government appeared to have an unshaken position—both in the House of Commons and the country: in politics, however, it is the unexpected that happens. In October 1923, during the Recess, Mr. Baldwin, as leader of the Party, attended the annual Conservative Conference at Plymouth. He there delivered an address, the immediate consequences of which he probably did not himself realize, but which have helped to make history. There is no doubt that for some time previously he, as an experienced industrialist, had been watching with increasing anxiety the menacing growth of unemployment, and had slowly but surely come to the conclusion that the most drastic measures were required for dealing with it, one of which must be the protection of home industries against the dumping of cheap foreign goods. This meant, of course, a reversal of the time-honoured policy of Free Trade, which had become almost a fetish, and which could not be modified without a mandate from the electorate. There were many of his supporters like myself who believed that he was right and that a change in our fiscal system was essential, but nevertheless were of opinion that

he was minimizing the very serious practical difficulties in putting such a policy before the country without adequate preparation. Mr. Bonar Law, who was well-known as a Protectionist, had himself given a definite pledge that no such fundamental change would be made during the lifetime of the then existing Government, and in any event the bulk of the Party was still unconvinced of its wisdom or necessity.

However, the die was cast; and in spite of such misgivings which were shared by the majority of the Party Mr. Baldwin resigned and determined to seek a mandate in favour of Protection.

And so it happened that in little more than a year after my first triumphant return for the Lowestoft Division I found myself again seeking the suffrages of the "free and independent electors".

Although I had undoubtedly strengthened my hold on the constituency and improved my personal status during the preceding twelve months, it was clear from the outset that the fight would be a stiff one. There was, first of all, a widespread resentment against Mr. Baldwin personally for having so speedily abandoned the Bonar Law policy of tranquillity, and so wantonly, as it seemed to many people, plunged the country into all the upheaval and turmoil of another General Election; and secondly the prejudice in favour of the time-honoured policy of Free Trade was still very strong. To those brought up in the Liberal tradition and who voted "yaller" mainly because their fathers and grandfathers had done so, Free Trade was much more than an economic policy, a mere matter of expediency: it was an article of faith upon which the greatness and prosperity of the country during the past century had been built. And it was this feeling that the Liberal Party was determined to exploit to the full. Although Mr. Baldwin had made it clear that his new fiscal policy only applied to foreign manufactured goods and did not embrace the taxation of foodstuffs, the cry of "Hands off the people's food" became rampant. Far from scrupulously, the Liberals even stationed their agents outside all the grocers' and provision shops, who ominously warned housewives as they went in and out that if the wicked Tories were returned "your food will cost you more"; and as the election proceeded something approaching a condition of panic—especially among the women voters—began to prevail. I felt myself losing ground day by day, and soon realized that even the great majority I had secured at the previous election might very easily melt away like snow before the morning sun. Misrepresentation was widespread, and the temper too of the electors began to rise. There was a certain amount of open disorder at our meetings, and the confidence of the Liberals increased accordingly.

My Labour opponent was once again Mr. Robert Mellanby, whilst the Liberals imported a "foreigner" as their candidate in the person of F. G. Paterson, a brother barrister from London. Although he only arrived, "unheralded and unsung", on the very eve of nomination day and was entirely unknown locally, it is some proof of the strength of feeling against us that in ten days he was able to make so much headway as to become a dangerous runner-up.

Personally I found no difficulty in supporting Mr. Baldwin's policy to the full, because ever since my undergraduate days, when more than once I sat at the feet of the famous protagonist of Tariff Reform, Joseph Chamberlain, I entertained a strong belief in the necessity of a protective tariff against the

dumping of cheap foreign goods, and felt fully convinced that, although the country had prospered exceedingly during the era of Free Trade, it was rather in spite of that policy than by reason of it. All the same, the tide was flowing strongly against us, and we had to flood the constituency with thousands of leaflets reiterating the pledge that there would be no tax on the people's food; and even so many of my supporters were extremely apprehensive as to the result.

However, in the end all was well, the figures of this election being as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|--------|
| G. Rentoul (C.) | .. | .. | 11,103 |
| F. G. Paterson (Lib.) | .. | .. | 8,362 |
| R. Mellanby (Lab.) | .. | .. | 4,788 |
| Conservative majority | | | 2,741 |

I had therefore succeeded in holding the seat, but only on a split vote and with a substantially reduced majority. And furthermore, it could be argued with some plausibility that the result was a verdict in favour of Free Trade, on which both Labour and Liberals had joined forces, and against Protection. However, I had had the satisfaction of proving that even in a traditionally Free Trade part of the country, faith in that policy was waning; and in my speech on the declaration of the poll I felt justified in declaring that "the fight against an outworn economic shibboleth will go on, and Lowestoft has helped to lead the way".

All the same, taking the country as a whole, the result of the election was a not unexpected but disastrous defeat for the Conservative administration, which had taken office a bare twelve months before with such high hopes.

It was one of the few occasions when Mr. Baldwin's political judgment seems to have been entirely at fault. Although still the largest Party, with 258 members as against 191 Labour and 156 Liberals, the Conservatives no longer had a working majority. As a result, the country was once again subjected to a Coalition, although this time it assumed the form of a Socialist Government with qualified Liberal support. Opinions still differ as to whether Mr. Asquith was wise in believing it to be the psychological moment for trying the experiment of a Socialist Government.

But however that may be, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Labour Party, was sent for by His Majesty and "kissed hands" as Prime Minister; and although there was a good deal of apprehension in the City and elsewhere, both the Constitution and the country survived.

The new Prime Minister certainly could not be accused of any lack of confidence in himself, even though he obviously had very little in most of his Cabinet colleagues, for he boldly undertook the office of Foreign Secretary, in addition to the Premiership and the onerous task of leading the House of Commons; and so far as foreign affairs went his confidence did not prove unjustified. The main problems at the time were our relations with France and Russia, and Mr. MacDonald effected a settlement of both, which won for the moment almost universal approval. Hitlerism had not yet thrown its dark shadow on the horizon, and, in regard to Germany, the main objective of European statesmanship was the restoration of economic stability and the settlement of the thorny problem of "reparations". The famous "Dawes" Plan was therefore put into operation, the evacuation of the Ruhr began, and the Prime Minister was able to persuade both France and Belgium to withdraw their customs barriers from within German territory.

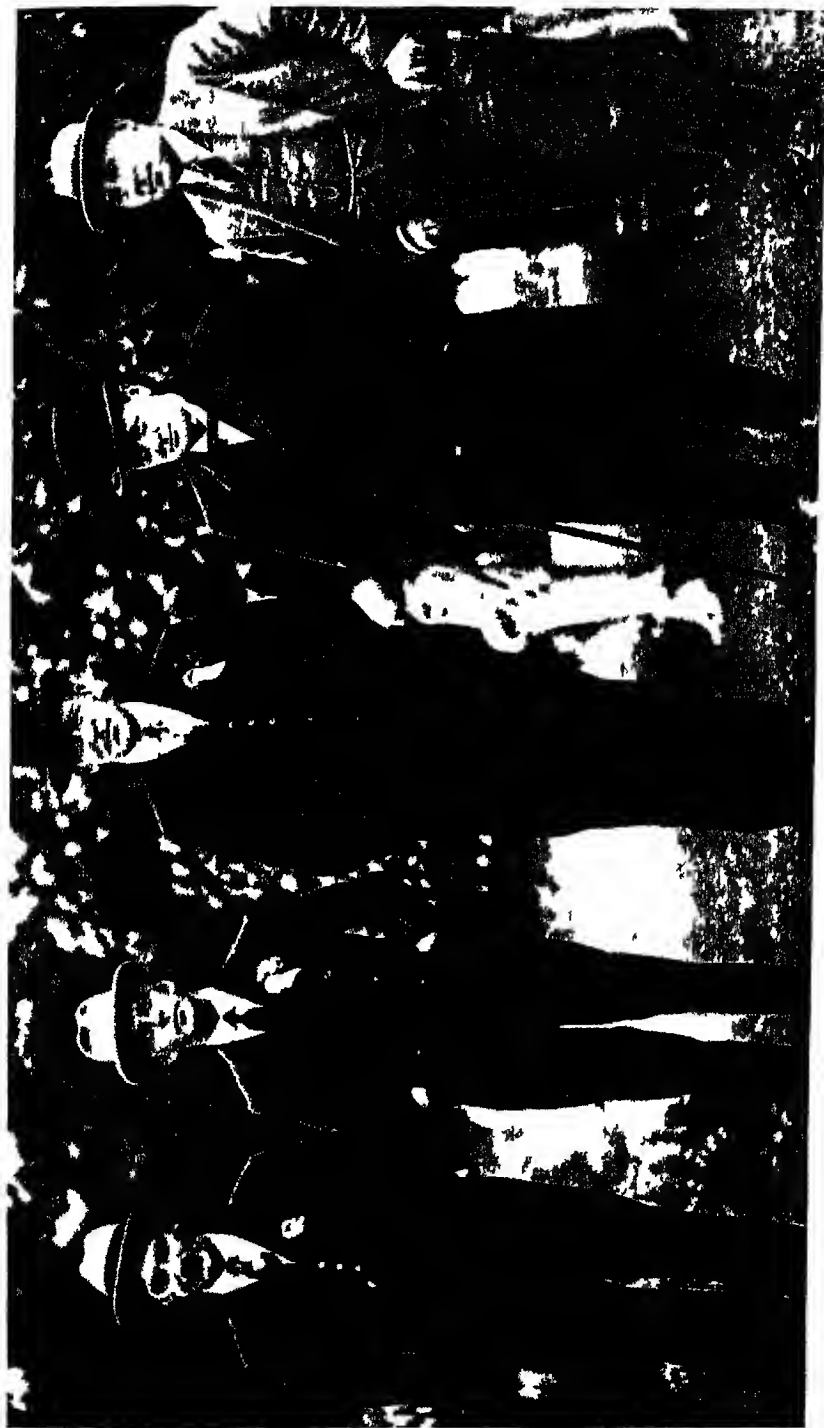
"The settlement with France is a brilliant feather in Mr. MacDonald's cap," wrote the *Daily News*. "To have succeeded where Bonar Law, Baldwin and Lloyd George failed is a considerable achievement."

But all the same, successes abroad could not atone for failures at home. The Socialists soon showed they had no definite, considered, long-term policy of their own in either domestic or foreign affairs, or even in regard to unemployment, on the solution of which they had staked their existence.

But in addition there were personal difficulties seriously affecting the prestige of the Government. At first there was a tendency on the part of the public to regard the Labour Cabinet as an object for ridicule rather than as an instrument of State. A certain amusement was caused by the efforts of some of the promoted Trade Union officials to accommodate themselves to Court dress. The dress-shirts of Mr. J. H. Thomas, ex-engine-driver and railwaymen's leader, were a godsend to the cartoonist. The spectacle was also intriguing of a miner, Mr. James Brown, and his wife leaving their Lanarkshire cottage to take up residence for a few fabulous days in the Palace of Holyrood, when Mr. Brown was appointed to represent the King at the Assembly of the Church of Scotland and of a former Metropolitan policeman becoming Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household. Even the Prime Minister had his own personal difficulties. Having been pilloried for years as an "enemy of society" on the ground of his opposition to capitalism, he was now accused of being a "bloated capitalist" himself! Certain newspapers got wind of the fact that Mr. MacDonald held a number of shares in the well-known Scottish firm of biscuit-makers, McVittie & Price, Ltd., and, what was far worse, that he had accepted from the head of the firm, Sir Alexander Grant, the present of a Daimler car and an annual sum for its upkeep. As a matter of fact, Sir Alexander had been a school-friend of the Prime Minister's, and he explained that the car was merely an expression of admiration for the services rendered to the State by Mr. MacDonald, and was made solely with the desire of conserving the Prime Minister's energies for his work. Indeed, it must be admitted that the manner in which this incident was exploited by some of the less scrupulous newspapers was far from creditable, especially as it was commonly reported that Lord Oxford, for instance, had been in receipt for many years of a regular income of £3,500 a year from his millionaire friend, Lord Cowdray.

And, in addition to all this, the Government was seriously handicapped by the fact that they had no working majority, and that anything in the nature of bold action was impossible. A compromise had to be negotiated at every turn with the Liberals, by whose support alone the Government was able to maintain itself in office. Furthermore, it entirely lacked an adequate Press: indeed, throughout the whole country there was only one national newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, the circulation of which was then insignificant, which gave the new Government sustained support, although a few other papers simulated an impartiality they did not feel, and which was often more damaging than open hostility.

But unemployment still remained the acid test by which the Government must ultimately stand or fall; and it was therefore distinctly awkward that the Minister of Labour's premature boast of an improvement should be followed immediately by a large increase in the unemployment figures, and that when questioned about this he could only make the lame excuse of not being a conjurer able "to produce rabbits out of a hat".



NORTH COVE, 1926

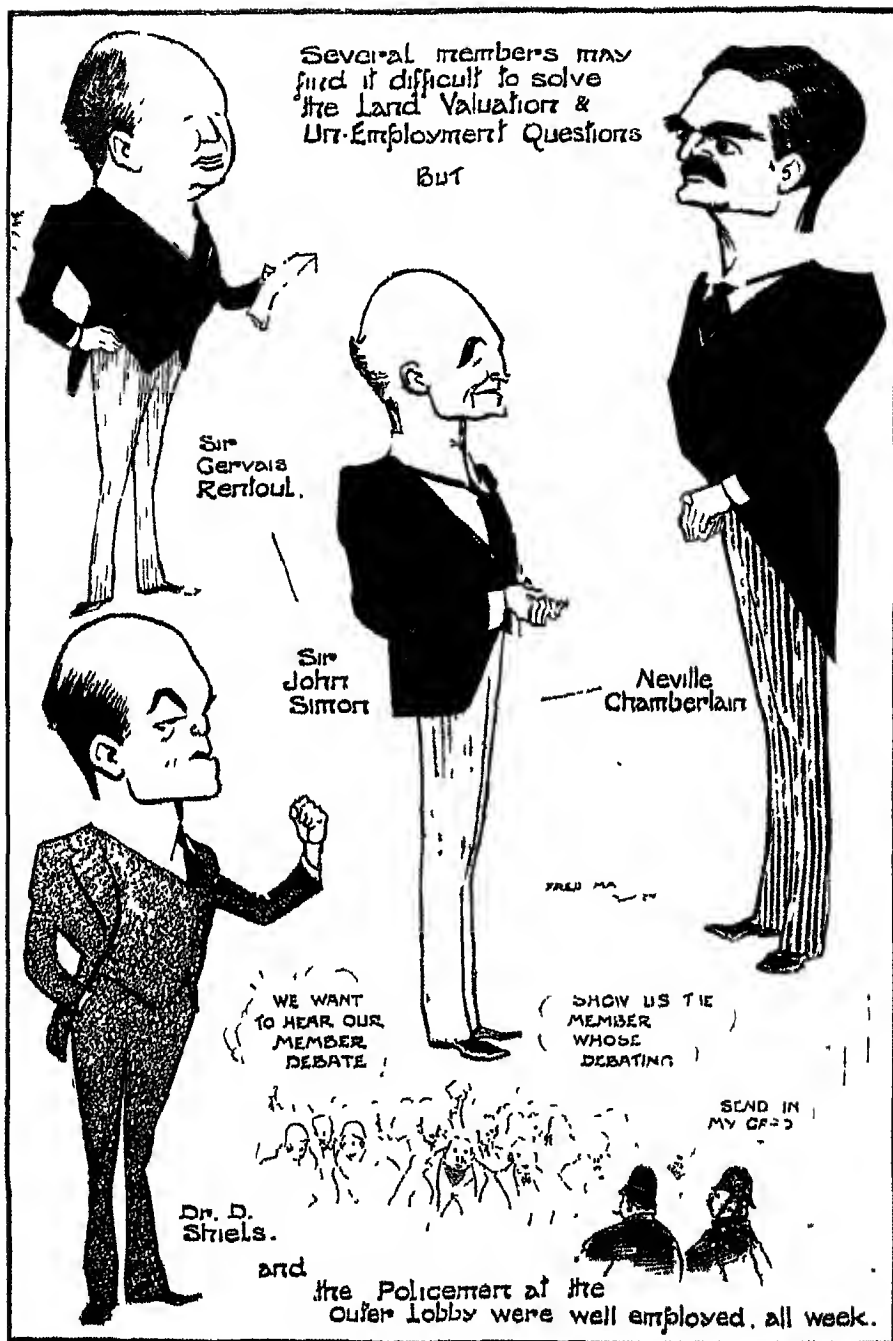
Captain Fortrey Heap.

Frank Farrell, J.P.

The Author.

Rt Hon Winston Churchill, M.P.
(Chancellor of Exchequer)

Captain Griffyth
Fairfax, M.P.



[Drawn by Fred May]

A WEEKLY ROUND OF THE COMMONS WITH A "GRAPHIC" ARTIST

But in the end the Government settled its own fate by an inexplicable piece of bungling over what came to be known as the notorious "Campbell Case" to which I have already referred.

And so once again, for the third time in two years, I found myself involved in another General Election. My opponents were the same as on the previous occasion, Paterson and Mellanby, both of whom had meanwhile been working hard. All the same, I felt I was batting on a better wicket. The worthlessness of the Socialist claim to possess a cure for unemployment had been clearly demonstrated; the time-serving attempt of the Liberals to hold the balance of power between the two major parties without having any constructive policy of their own had irritated and angered the country; and there was a growing feeling that perhaps Mr. Baldwin had been right after all in thinking we could no longer afford the luxury of being the only Free Trade country in a highly protected world, or tolerate the continued dumping on our shores of cheap foreign manufactured goods. Indeed, this was something which was causing even many traditional Free Traders to waver in their economic faith.

On the other hand, the Socialist Government had shown that it was a much tamer beast than had been supposed. But that was not enough to change Conservative opinion regarding the general futility of Socialism, whilst in the ranks of Labour this very tameness had disappointed the workers. Nevertheless the feeling was fairly widespread that perhaps the Government had not been given altogether a fair chance, even though most of the Labour Ministers had shown themselves to be second-raters and extremely susceptible to dictation by Communist and other extremists. There were, therefore, the usual cross-currents which make themselves felt in any election, and this fact made it impossible to leave anything to chance. But, all the same, I felt fairly confident, and for the first fortnight the election ran its normal course. But then there suddenly exploded a bombshell in the shape of the notorious "Zinovieff Letter", the repercussion of which knocked the Socialists sideways, and also finally wrecked the Liberal Party, who were regarded as their accomplices. After that, the result of the election was no longer in any doubt.

This "Red Letter", as it came to be known, first appeared in the *Daily Mail*; and it will always remain a mystery as to how the paper got hold of it. At first some of the Labour leaders rashly proclaimed that the letter itself was a forgery; but this of course raised the awkward dilemma that if so how did it come about that the Foreign Office, and presumably Mr. MacDonald himself, had treated it as genuine? Indeed, there is no doubt that all the high officials at the Foreign Office were quite satisfied as to the letter's authenticity, and therefore Labour's repudiation of it became something of a boomerang. At all events, Mr. MacDonald was placed in an impossible position, and the "Zinovieff Letter" finally shattered any chance of success Labour might otherwise have had. Furthermore, there was deep resentment against both the Socialists and the Liberals, as there had been against Mr. Baldwin on the previous occasion, for having involved the country so soon in yet another and wholly unwanted General Election. As to Free Trade and Protection, Mr. Baldwin had meanwhile learned much; and there was no wild talk this time about the immediate imposition of tariffs. All the same, there was a good deal of bitter feeling among the Socialists because of the way things had gone, and at some of my meetings there were one or two ugly scenes. After one of them, I found that the cushions

of my car had been slashed and the gear levers twisted, so that it was quite unusable and had to be towed to a garage. There was also a considerable amount of hooliganism in the streets, but the result was never really in doubt, and when the figures were announced it was revealed that once again I had won by a clear majority over both my opponents—the Liberals this time being at the bottom of the poll, which indeed was general throughout the country. For, as Mr. Garvin wrote in the *Observer*: "Mr. MacDonald's administration received its death-blow at the hands of Liberalism, and the Liberals themselves committed Parliamentary suicide by that same act."

The figures on this occasion were as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|--------|
| G. Rentoul (Con.) | .. | .. | 13,422 |
| R. Mellanby (Lab.) | .. | .. | 6,570 |
| F. G. Paterson (Lib.) | .. | .. | 6,532 |
| Conservative majority | | | 6,582 |

I quote the figures of my various elections not because they are of any particular interest in themselves, but because certain reflections to which they give rise affect the working of our democratic system. For instance, it is interesting to note that the highest number of electors who voted in my constituency at any of the five Parliamentary elections in which I was personally concerned was roughly 33,000, i.e. about 65 to 70 per cent of the electorate. This was a fairly high proportion, taking the country as a whole. But can anyone say it is really satisfactory? What does it mean in fact? Simply this, that if we make a 10 per cent reduction for illness or unavoidable absence—which I suppose would be reasonable—there are some twenty to twenty-five electors in every hundred who are so little interested in the vital issues at stake that they do not take the trouble to vote at all. Surely this displays a state of apathy and ignorance which strikes at the very roots of our democracy, and one might ask whether the time has not come when an elector should be under some legal compulsion—as is the case in certain European countries—either to record his vote or at all events make some formal expression of his desire to abstain. A vote should be regarded not merely as a right or a privilege but also as a duty, and my own view is that those who fail in this elementary obligation of citizenship should be penalized in some way for their failure.

As Mr. Baldwin was Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party throughout the greater part of my Parliamentary life, I had many more opportunities of meeting him, both in public and private, than any other Prime Minister of my time, of whom altogether there were five.

Not only did I see and hear him constantly in the House of Commons, but several times I was by his side at large public gatherings in my own constituency and elsewhere, and on more than one occasion was a member of the same house-party as well as having talks with him from time to time in his private room on personal matters. Yet, although he was always kind and sympathetic, I must confess that I found him—as many other people have done—something of a conundrum.

I think there is not much doubt he was by nature a shy man, and that this sometimes created a misleading impression and led to him being regarded as stand-offish and casual. But what was his real character? It is an interesting speculation in the case of one whose outward appearance and

superficial characteristics seemed so much at variance with his mental outlook as revealed by act or spoken word at various important turning-points in his life. Politicians are often accused of using words to conceal thoughts, but Mr. Baldwin's speeches were a revelation of character, especially when he was among friends and started what he used to call "thinking aloud". It was because of the contradictions between these unofficial discourses and certain of his public pronouncements that to many people he was so much of an enigma. Both in his public life and personal qualities he was a mass of contradictions. His favourite pose—although perhaps that is an unfair word to apply to it—was to present himself as a plain blunt man without guile or subtlety and without any flair for politics. Yet there were many occasions on which he proved himself a shrewd and subtle politician, and quite a match for those who, like Mr. Lloyd George, prided themselves on being masters of political strategy. Behind his somewhat bucolic appearance was concealed the temperament of a poet, a man of letters and a lover of the classics. Sometimes his judgment, fortified by imperturbable common sense, was incomparably sound, but at other times he acted with inexplicable rashness and lack of prudence. On the whole I am inclined to think his main defect—and here I am only stating a personal impression—was that he was temperamentally lazy unless galvanized into activity by some exceptional crisis. Generally speaking, he was inclined to let things take their course and hope for the best. On the other hand, if they became sufficiently unpleasant, he was capable of swift and resolute action and more than once made mincemeat of his opponents. Perhaps he spoke more truly than he realized when describing himself as being of "a somewhat flabby nature". He was one of those who always preferred agreement to disagreement, although the Quaker strain in his blood would make him go to the stake rather than give up a principle. At all events, one source of his power was that he seldom promised anything unless he was sure he could make the promise good.

In July 1924 Mr. Baldwin paid a visit to my constituency in connection with a Conservative fête at Lowestoft, and certainly nothing could have been better than the impression he then made on all with whom he came in contact. People seemed to recognize him as a kindred spirit: a man without swank or side, who could be relied upon to look at any question from the point of view of the man in the street. His speech struck the same note, and although not one of his best efforts, for at the time he was still feeling his feet, it went down extremely well by reason of the straightforward simplicity and common sense with which he expressed his views.

In the two following years, by way of complete contrast, we were favoured by visits from men of a totally different calibre: Winston Churchill and Douglas Hogg. Though they both possessed gifts of oratory and showmanship which were in striking contrast to the more diffident methods of Baldwin, yet strangely enough there was little doubt as to who made the best impression on the unemotional, rather stolid people of East Anglia.

Today the place in history held by Winston Churchill is secure, and he will doubtless be remembered as one of the greatest British statesmen of all time. But ten or fifteen years ago it was very different and there were comparatively few who would have prophesied for him then the mighty rôle he has since been called upon to play. Indeed, throughout his career there have never been any half measures: he was either on top of the wave or in imminent danger of being submerged altogether. I well remember that when he was appointed Chancellor

of the Exchequer in 1925 by Mr. Baldwin many people thought a grave mistake had been made, and they foreshadowed the most gloomy consequences, which, needless to say, did not materialize, although his tenure of the Chancellorship was probably the least successful of the many high offices of State he has held. However, he was always a picturesque figure, and throughout his life his dominant personality has had an overwhelming appeal for large sections of the British people. We may indeed give thanks to the Almighty that, in the supreme crisis of our fate when the whole world seemed to be in grave danger of slipping back into the slimy morass of mediaeval barbarism and cruelty, and when the "law of the jungle" appeared for a time to be supreme, Britain should have had a leader so exceptionally gifted, so full of lofty ideals, driving force and imaginative instinct as Winston Churchill.

In my somewhat remote constituency we naturally regarded it as a real feather in our cap when he kindly consented to speak at a large Conservative gathering held in the delightful grounds of one of my most valued constituents, Captain Fortrey Heap. For this honour we were indebted to the Chairman of our local Association, Mr. Frank Farrell, who happened to be President of the Silk Association of Great Britain. In this capacity he had rendered the Chancellor invaluable help in advising him on the incidence of the new silk duties, which were one of Winston Churchill's many bold experiments.

The preliminary investigations before the imposition of any new taxation have to be carried out in the strictest secrecy, in order to avoid speculation and profiteering, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer is naturally dependent for accurate and trustworthy information of a technical nature upon some source within the trade on which he can absolutely rely. In the case of the silk duties, owing to the large financial interests at stake, such information was especially hard to obtain, and Mr. Farrell had been most helpful in supplying it. To show his appreciation, therefore, the Chancellor had promised to speak at our annual Conservative fête, which gave rise to an entertaining episode.

It had occurred to someone—I think it must have been the ladies of the Association—that it would be a graceful compliment to make him an appropriate presentation, which included—*inter alia*, as lawyers say—a silk dressing-gown for himself and a complete set of silken underwear for Mrs. Churchill. The Chancellor, while expressing his deep appreciation, obviously felt in his official position some reluctance about accepting such a munificent gift. Finally a compromise was arrived at, whereby it was agreed he would send a cheque to some local charity for a sum commensurate with the value of the presentation, and many of my constituents were most intrigued to discover that he was quite as well acquainted with the cost of feminine underwear as with other details of national expenditure!

Winston Churchill will, of course, always be remembered as one of the greatest of Parliamentary debaters, and there is certainly no one who prepares his speeches on big occasions with more elaborate and meticulous care. For instance, when he paid us this visit he made a stipulation that he should be given at least an hour to himself in a room containing a full-length mirror—the reason presumably being that he wanted a last-minute opportunity to practise the delivery of his speech and study the effect of every gesture before a glass.

A friend of mine told me a story of how he once called on Winston Churchill when preparing an important speech, and found him striding majestically up and down the room declaiming certain passages of it in sonorous and rhetorical phrases, whilst all about—on window-curtains, chair-cushions and pieces of

furniture—were pinned small tags of paper on which were written various headings and slogans. At intervals he would stride up to one of them, scratch out a phrase he did not like and scribble something else in its place. He explained he had found this the best way of memorizing his speeches, as the sentences thus written down and distributed in a certain order about the room stamped themselves on his brain.

In addition to these preparations Churchill generally fortified himself on all important occasions with elaborate notes underlined in blue pencil and red ink.

CHAPTER VI

TWELVE YEARS AN M.P. (II)

BUT now let me resume my survey of the course of events. Once again Mr. Baldwin was in the saddle supported by a large and compact, if somewhat disgruntled, Conservative majority; for many Members still felt that both the elections of 1922 and 1923, as well as the unfortunate Socialist interregnum, could have been avoided if only he had shown less impetuosity in trying to force upon the country fiscal changes for which it was unprepared. However, all's well that ends well, and a Conservative Government was back in office. This did not mean, however, that everything was now plain sailing—far from it: a policy of tranquillity was just as much a mirage as ever. The outlook abroad remained highly disturbing; financial and political crises succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity, whilst at home the unemployment figures obstinately stuck at well over a million. Furthermore, fresh clouds were looming on the horizon; everywhere one looked there was trouble ahead; industrially and commercially Britain was fast losing ground. Her shippers, bankers and manufacturers, overweighted with taxation and faced with an increasingly fierce competition from countries where the standards of living and wage levels were so much lower, found themselves no longer able to compete on equal terms in the world's markets. There was therefore a widespread demand by the employers for a reduction of wages, especially in some of the basic industries. Naturally this caused deep resentment among the workers, particularly in the coalfields, which even in more prosperous days had long been a happy hunting ground for the extremist and the agitator. There was a good deal of public sympathy with the miners; their life was known to be a hard one and full of danger. Nevertheless their demand for nationalization of the mines—which was felt to imply a permanent subsidy out of the pockets of the already harassed taxpayers—did not seem to provide a satisfactory solution of the economic difficulties.

Unfortunately both miners and mine-owners proved equally obdurate and intractable, and on April 30th, 1926, the owners delivered an ultimatum terminating all existing contracts with the men and fixing new wage schedules, involving cuts in some cases of fifteen to twenty shillings a week, to take effect immediately. Thereupon the miners, not unnaturally in view of the assurances they had received, struck work, and appealed to the Trades Union Congress to support them by calling a general strike.

Although Mr. Baldwin continued to do his utmost to avoid a rupture, the Government, as was its bare duty, had taken steps to build up during the

preceding months a highly efficient organization to meet the emergency should it arise. The whole country had been marked out in convenient areas, each to be controlled by a commissioner armed with special powers to ensure the maintenance of food supplies and essential services. Schemes had been drawn up on paper for recruiting voluntary workers and for the distribution of food. For instance, no sooner was the strike declared than, in accordance with prearranged plans, Hyde Park was closed to the public and transformed into a vast centre for the distribution of milk. Hundreds of lorries were commandeered, and the centre was able to handle a supply of two million gallons of milk a day. The T.U.C. had evidently failed to appreciate the completeness of the Government's preparations; otherwise, in spite of a delegate vote of 3,655,000 workers in favour of a general strike, as against 49,000 in opposition, they might have realized it was useless to proceed. As matters stood, however, there were many Conservative Members, of whom I was one, who believed that the time had come for a show-down. This was not due to inhumanity or irresponsibility on our part, but merely because we felt convinced that there could be no industrial prosperity or security for workers or employers alike so long as industry was constantly threatened by extremists and that the attacks would not cease until the challenge had been met and defeated in a decisive battle. Indeed, nearly a year before, some of us had introduced a *Private Members' Bill* to bring about certain reforms in the Trade Disputes Act of 1916, which we believed constituted a grave injustice to hundreds and thousands of Conservative working men, who were in effect compelled under the provisions of that Act to contribute, against their will, to the political funds of the Labour Party. Furthermore, we held the view that it was a gross anomaly that Civil Service organizations, which were supposed to give unbiassed support to whatever Government might be in power, should be permitted to affiliate themselves to the T.U.C., and consequently be under Socialist domination. With considerable reluctance we had, however, withdrawn this Bill, because of a moving appeal by Mr. Baldwin for "peace in our time", and a plea that we, at any rate, should not fire the first shot. Nevertheless, matters had gone from bad to worse; and just as many people believed prior to the outbreak of the present war that there could be no lasting peace until Nazi Germany had been fought and crushed, so we felt that the threat of a general strike must sooner or later be met and overcome even at the cost of heavy industrial casualties.

As so often happens, the actual break occurred over a comparatively minor incident. The T.U.C. were still in touch with the Government, and had actually retired in order to consider a formula for a settlement put forward by Lord Birkenhead, who, although popularly regarded as a firebrand, assumed, not for the first time, the rôle of peacemaker. Whilst they were absent, however, startling news reached the Cabinet, namely that the National Association of Operative Printers' Assistants working in the office of the *Daily Mail* had refused to print the next day's issue of the paper unless a leading article entitled "For King and Country", to which they took exception, was withdrawn, as well as a news item directing anti-strike volunteers to recruiting stations in the London area. This indefensible interference with the freedom of the Press forced the Cabinet to the conclusion that it could not continue the negotiations; and consequently when the Labour leaders returned to Downing Street they found the room in darkness and that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had separated. This meant, of course, that war had been declared and that the

strike must go on. The next day the House of Commons met in an atmosphere of deepest gloom. Mr. Baldwin himself made a moving and emotional speech, in which he declared that:

"Everything I care for most is smashed to bits. We may in this House be full of strife today; but before long the angel of peace, with healing in his wings, will be with us again. When he comes may we be there to meet him. I shall pick up the bits and I shall start again."

The situation was full of danger and uncertainty. In the House of Commons none of us knew what would happen next: the atmosphere was electric. We all realized that the country was closer to civil war than had been the case for nearly three hundred years, and that the possibility of actual fighting and bloodshed in the streets was one to be reckoned with. The Labour leaders appeared more frightened than anyone else. They realized that by their action forces had been unleashed which they were no longer able to control. Some of them—notably J. H. Thomas—were in tears, and everyone was deeply moved.

On the first day of the strike London was an extraordinary sight. There were no buses, tubes, trams or lorries except a few bearing a large label "O.H.M.S." A small number of owner-driven taxis still plied for hire, and reaped a rich harvest; but thousands of people were walking to their work, obviously determined to get there somehow. I started off to motor from Maida Vale to the Temple, and gave lifts to several weary pedestrians *en route*. When I got as far as Hyde Park it presented an amazing sight. Overnight it had been turned into a vast milk depot, with huts, sentry-boxes, telephones and thousands of lorries. The organization was first-class, and reflected immense credit on the foresight and efficiency of the Government plans for meeting the emergency. With some difficulty I managed to reach the Houses of Parliament, but could go no farther. The scene on the Embankment was beyond belief. It was literally packed, from side to side, as far as the eye could reach, with stationary cars of every description: thousands of them in an immovable block. I left my car in Palace Yard and walked the rest of the way to the Temple. How the jam on the Embankment was ever sorted out I do not know.

At the House in the afternoon it was announced that the Government had taken control of the wireless; but, with what was considered laudable impartiality, not only official Government bulletins were being broadcast, but also those issued by the T.U.C., breathing all sorts of threats unless their demands were satisfied. Most Members considered this intolerable, and a small deputation, of which I was one, hastened to see "Jix" (Sir William Joynson-Hicks), the Home Secretary, and protested strongly. We pointed out that this was war by a section of the people against the State, and that it was therefore indefensible to assist the propaganda of the enemy. Orders were thereupon given that no further T.U.C. bulletins should be published.

The House also speedily passed an Emergency Powers Act by 377 to 96, giving the Government the fullest authority to take all necessary measures. The Socialists were furious; but the Attorney-General (Sir Douglas Hogg) refused to give way an inch. Many violent and revolutionary speeches were made, particularly by the Clydeside Reds, and several of them were expelled for disorderly conduct. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York were in the Gallery at the time, and one could not help wondering what they thought about some of the fiery demands that were being made for the immediate abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a Socialist republic.

One of the most foolish actions of the T.U.C. was a threat to withdraw workmen from the House of Commons, in order to try to force Parliament itself to close down. This created the greatest resentment, in which many Labour Members themselves shared. But the Speaker rose to the occasion, and firmly declared that he would not allow the work of the House to be interfered with by anyone whatever. "If necessary, I will conduct the business of the House without printing and by candlelight."

Another bad mistake of the T.U.C. was to declare that every lorry on the streets—even those carrying food—must have a permit from the Strike Committee. The Government immediately sent a military convoy of armoured cars with steel-helmeted drivers to bring food from the docks to Hyde Park; it was an impressive sight.

Indeed, it soon became clear that the Labour leaders had seriously overcalled their hand, and that the strike was doomed to failure; also that no section of the community can succeed in bringing the life of the nation to a standstill, which was the avowed purpose of the General Strike. It was speedily proved that even the so-called "key men" were not indispensable, and that society had sufficient reserves of industrial spare parts to keep the machinery going in an emergency. Indeed, perhaps the most striking feature of those few days of bitter conflict was the success of the amateurs in keeping the essential services going. I fancy many so-called skilled workmen must have wondered for the first time in their lives whether after all they were so indispensable as they had been persuaded to believe.

After the strike had been in progress for a few days I was naturally anxious to know how matters were progressing in my own constituency, and I decided to pay it a flying visit. To my surprise—having regard to the general state of excitement in London—I found everything quite normal and peaceful, although no newspapers were reaching them, and as a result a certain number of rumours were flying around. However, the wireless, which was then in its infancy, proved invaluable. It provided a means of giving reliable information to the whole country at one time, which could not have been done in any other way. But comparatively few people had wireless sets, and loud-speakers were practically unknown, so in Lowestoft we organized a scheme whereby the official news was taken down in shorthand as it was broadcast, and then roneoed off and distributed among the people two or three times a day. This was most helpful in calming public apprehension.

Finally the T.U.C. recognized they were beaten, and called off the strike unconditionally, to the heartfelt relief of everyone. It had been a great triumph that Britain should have come through this period of trial without bloodshed and with so little physical violence, and it was clear that other countries were greatly impressed. Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of the strike was the determination of the British public as a whole to get on with their job. This being so, most people regarded the abnormal conditions as something of an adventure, and almost everyone was able to boast of some feat of personal initiative and endurance. The Prime Minister acted with a fine magnanimity on the collapse of the strike, and showed wisdom as well as humanity in undertaking to prevent any vindictive action by the employers against the men; for in some quarters there were indications of a revengeful spirit against those who had brought about so much industrial dislocation and

material loss. This was of course enormous: the emergency services alone had cost over a million pounds, and the indirect loss to trade and commerce was estimated at thirty to forty millions at the very least. But, on the other hand, the collapse of the General Strike meant that the guns of the extremists had been spiked, and the hollowness of their threats exposed. Labour had suffered the worst setback in all its history. The Trades Union Congress was for the time being badly crippled, and its membership fell by some hundreds of thousands. Disillusionment spread throughout the ranks, as well as anger and bitterness at the humiliation brought upon the workers by the bungling of their leaders.

On the credit side, however, it was believed that the country had heard the last of the General Strike as an instrument of industrial warfare, and could look forward to an era of peace in industry such as had not been experienced since the war. The miners fought on stubbornly for six months longer, with desperate and lamentable courage, but at the end of November they all went back to work on the owners' terms: this supplying the final ironical touch of futility.

So far as Mr. Baldwin was concerned, he had come out of this tragic episode with greatly enhanced prestige: he had been inflexible in meeting the threat to the nation; he had won a notable victory without the shedding of blood and civil strife that had been so widely feared; and after that victory was won he had shown himself wise and magnanimous in refusing to countenance anything in the nature of vindictive or retributive action against the strikers; and indeed had given a pledge on behalf of the nation to this effect. Unfortunately his generous spirit was not shared by some employers or even by some Trade Unions. There were elements on both sides which showed a disposition to penalize those who, on the one hand, had taken part in the strike, and those who, on the other, had refused to come out at the Unions' bidding. Shortly after the strike was called off there had been an unpleasant episode when the railway managers' association announced that "in the interests of future peace and discipline", the companies reserved the right to refuse to take back any man who had broken his contract. But they had reckoned without Mr. Baldwin, who naturally regarded this as a deliberate breach of the pledge he had given, and who therefore compelled them to withdraw their ultimatum and reinstate all their wayward workers. Nevertheless a deep feeling of bitterness remained for some years—particularly in the Labour ranks, still smarting from their defeat, as is proved by an incident nearly three years later in which I myself was directly concerned. Shortly after the General Election of 1929, which placed a Labour Government again in power, it came to my knowledge that the Hull City Council, on which there was a Labour majority, were proposing to dismiss 114 of their employees who had remained at their posts during the strike, and that other Labour Councils intended to follow suit. This, of course, was a glaring violation of Mr. Baldwin's pledge; but when the Government were questioned about the matter, Miss Margaret Bondfield, who was then Minister of Labour, replied that it was not a matter in which the Government felt it could take any action. After discussing the matter with Mr. Baldwin and the Party Whips, it was arranged that I should introduce a Private Members' Bill compelling the Hull Council to refrain from their high-handed action. This raised a considerable storm in the Labour ranks, and feelings ran very high indeed: in fact it led to one of those unpleasant occasions—fortunately rare in the life of Parliament—which the Press like to describe as a "scene" in the House. When I rose to move the

second reading of my Prevention of Victimization Bill, I was greeted with groans and boos, and spoke to a constant stream of interruptions and murmurs of dissent and anger from the Labour Benches. For some minutes it was difficult for me to proceed, and although Mr. Winston Churchill endeavoured to obtain a hearing for me and told the interrupters that they ought to be ashamed of themselves, this merely added fuel to the flames; and two Labour Members advanced across the floor of the House, apparently intending to make a physical assault upon Mr. Churchill, from which they were only restrained with difficulty by some of their more level-headed colleagues. Lady Houston, of Schneider Cup fame, had undertaken to bear the costs of any legal action the dismissed men might be advised to take, and this led to jeers and gibes concerning myself and my "lady friend", whom, incidentally, I had never met. It was certainly an occasion full of excitement, which reflected little credit on the dignity of Parliament. After a short but heated discussion my Bill was defeated by a small majority, but the whole incident shows that the bitter feelings aroused during the General Strike had by no means disappeared. But I am anticipating and must go back.

On the whole, during the years following the strike, the prestige and authority of the Conservative Party was higher than it had been for a long time.

When, therefore, the time came in 1929 for the Government to seek a renewal of its mandate it was believed to have a good record of achievement to put before the electors. Mr. Baldwin's election slogan of "Safety First" may have been somewhat unimaginative, but nevertheless seemed to summarize fairly accurately the outstanding need of the country for steady, cautious progress at home and abroad, and for the avoidance of anything in the nature of reckless Socialist expedients or rash adventures in the field of either foreign affairs or domestic politics.

But what had not been sufficiently appreciated was the incalculable effect of the recent enfranchisement of women, who now substantially outnumbered the men, owing to the extension of the franchise to every young "flapper", as they were called, of twenty-one. As it was a Conservative Government that had carried this revolutionary measure into law, it was prophesied that a majority of the newly enfranchised voters would support the Conservative Party, whereas the very opposite proved to be the case; and, like many other Unionist candidates, I very soon realized that this time I should be faced with the hardest fight of my life. In the Lowestoft Division alone there were over ten thousand additional electors; and they were, of course, an entirely unknown quantity. Again I had to face a three-cornered contest, and both the Liberal and Labour Parties had adopted new and much more formidable candidates, in the persons of Mr. Owen Jones and Captain Basil Hall.

Owen Jones was a doctrinaire Liberal of the old school, prepared to swallow all the ancient shibboleths of pre-war Liberalism, but an excellent speaker and a hard-hitting opponent. We had many vigorous slogging matches during the campaign, both on the platform and in the columns of the local Press. At almost every meeting he made a practice of firing off at me lists of carefully framed questions—and incidentally demanding a reply—whilst I, at my meetings, would also endeavour to cross-examine him at long range. This certainly added to the vigour with which the campaign was conducted and the public interest it aroused. All the same, it was clear that Liberalism was a losing cause, and that it was only a matter of time before the Liberal Party itself

was likely to disappear altogether from the political stage, which of course is what has since happened for all practical purposes. The real conflict lay between Conservatism and Labour. Captain Basil Hall, the Labour candidate, could hardly be described as a politician at all. Perhaps some people may think this was to his credit, and I fancy he would not have cherished any political ambitions if it had not been for his wife, who at one time was a well-known militant suffragette. Her most famous exploit was said to have been on the occasion of her presentation at Court, when, after making her curtsy, she vociferously called the attention of Their Majesties to the burning question of votes for women. It must have been a somewhat embarrassing moment.

As I anticipated, the campaign proved the most strenuous I had yet fought in the Lowestoft Division, and the result seemed to be in considerable doubt up to the last moment; indeed, at the "count" many of my supporters who were present on this nerve-racking occasion became most depressed as they watched the bundles of votes mounting up on the tables for my opponents. But it soon became clear that my bundles were a little higher, and in the end I found myself again returned with a satisfactory—if substantially reduced—majority, the figures on this occasion being as follows:

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|--------|
| G. Rentoul (Con) | .. | .. | .. | 13,624 |
| Owen Jones (Lib) | .. | .. | .. | 10,707 |
| Captain Basil Hall (Soc) | .. | .. | .. | 9,903 |
| Conservative majority | | | | 2,917 |

But although I had managed to hold my seat, it was clear—as the results came in from the rest of the country—that the Conservative Party, although still the largest, once again was outnumbered by the two Opposition Parties, and that another Socialist Government was therefore inevitable, dependent, of course, on Liberal support. Mr. Baldwin resigned immediately, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was sent for by the King. This time he got together a much stronger team than in 1924, his most forceful and prominent colleagues being Philip Snowden as Chancellor of the Exchequer; J. H. Thomas as Lord Privy Seal; A. V. Alexander as First Lord of the Admiralty—a position which he holds once again with so much distinction; William Graham, an exceptionally brilliant and capable administrator, as President of the Board of Trade; and Wedgwood Benn as Secretary of State for India.

But all the same the position of the new Government was not a happy one, and very soon they again began to find themselves in troubled waters. We on the Conservative benches, who were now His Majesty's Opposition, viewed the situation with increasing disquiet and anxiety. Unemployment was spreading like a contagious disease, and soon reached the appalling total of two millions. Mr. J. H. Thomas had been appointed to the sinecure office of Lord Privy Seal for the sole purpose of leaving him free to try to devise a remedy; but beyond initiating one or two public utility schemes—road-making and the like—sanctioning some loans in order to stimulate emigration, and raising the school age from fourteen to fifteen, a sound scheme from an educational point of view, but very little use as a cure for unemployment, it was painfully obvious that the Socialists had no panacea to offer.

The situation abroad was equally alarming, yet the Government, within a month of taking office, stopped work on the building of two new British cruisers, cancelled orders for the construction of a number of new submarines

and depot ships, and generally embarked on a policy of unilateral disarmament, which seemed to many of us in the troubled state of the world, and having regard to the far-flung responsibilities of the British Empire, closely akin to lunacy. This, of course, was the beginning of that regime of short-sighted appeasement and sloppy sentimentalism which in ten years was to lead to the blood bath and horror of the Second World War.

During the latter part of 1929 and throughout 1930 matters went from bad to worse. The main weakness of the Government was that it was composed of men who first and last were almost entirely party politicians, unable to approach any question except from a party point of view, and more interested in trying to gain some party advantage than in furthering the best interests of the nation as a whole, at a time when civilization itself seemed to be slowly disintegrating. Whatever may have been the faults and weaknesses of the Prime Minister's own temperament, it was clear that the Labour Party had little cohesion or sense of loyalty, and were for the most part a highly unruly and mutinous crew. Then again, specific pledges had been given at the General Election regarding unemployment, the repeal of the Trades Disputes Act, disarmament and the like, and the Government was being pressed to deliver the goods. However, with the purely internal difficulties of the Government we of the Opposition were not concerned; but by the beginning of 1931 most thinking people, irrespective of party politics, were becoming seriously alarmed about the whole financial position of the country. The economic blizzard was blowing across the world with bitter biting blast; we had already lost one-third of our export trade, revenue was rapidly declining, and it was obvious that the forthcoming Budget would reveal a serious deficit. Yet the Government, in a vain endeavour to pacify its supporters, was proceeding with vast schemes of social reform—regardless of the cost. Unemployment relief, or what was commonly known as "the dole", had been increased during the previous two years by upwards of £120,000,000, and it was clear that if Britain was to avoid financial chaos and disaster something drastic would have to be done. In February 1931, therefore, the Opposition tabled a motion in the following terms:

That this House censures the Government for its policy of continuous additions to the public expenditure at a time when the avoidance of all new charges and strict economy in the existing services are necessary to restore confidence and to promote employment.

This was moved by Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, one of the ablest and most popular Members of the House of Commons, with moderation and obvious sincerity. No one who heard him speak on that occasion could have believed that within three days that voice would be stilled for ever. Worthington-Evans based his case on a Memorandum which Sir Richard Hopkins, the Controller of Finance at the Treasury, had recently put before the Royal Commission on Unemployment, in which he set out facts and figures proving beyond all doubt that the country was heading straight for national bankruptcy. The main interest of the debate naturally centred on Snowden's reply. Before he had been speaking many minutes it was obvious that he was quite unable to dispute the gravity of the situation, for speaking in very solemn tones, and addressing himself mainly to his own Party, he said:

The national position is so grave that drastic and disagreeable measures will have to be taken. Schemes involving heavy expenditure—however desirable they may be—will have to wait until prosperity returns.

On the Labour Benches his words were listened to in stony silence; and we who were sitting opposite watched with a certain cynical amusement the apprehension, doubt and embarrassment created by the Chancellor's words. Indeed, he did not disguise the fact that in his own opinion and that of his financial advisers the situation was about as bad as it could be.

The sole consideration was what steps could be taken to prevent an imminent financial collapse, with all its far-reaching and disastrous consequences, and an amendment was promptly moved by Sir Donald Maclean, a respected Liberal leader, urging the immediate setting up of a small and independent Committee, to make recommendations for effecting forthwith "all practicable and legitimate reductions in the national expenditure consistent with the efficiency of the services". This was accepted by the Government, and resulted in the appointment of the famous "May" Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir George May, which played such a decisive part in the creation of a National Government some three months later.

It was the May Report which clearly demonstrated that unless drastic steps were taken immediately the next Budget would show a deficit of at least £120,000,000, a figure which, significantly enough, approximated to the exact amount which the Socialists had overspent on unemployment relief during the previous two years, and as soon as these facts were generally known the almost inevitable consequences began to reveal themselves. There were signs of widespread panic, particularly among foreign investors. During the next few days enormous withdrawals were made, which seriously depleted the gold reserve of the Bank of England and threatened to undermine the whole of British credit. Tremendous economies were recommended by the May Committee, affecting every class of the community, and it was of course obvious that there would also have to be very large increases in taxation. The rank and file of the Socialists, however, still refused to face up to the situation, and particularly the grim fact that there would necessarily have to be considerable retrenchment in the matter of unemployment pay. It soon became clear, therefore, that a serious split was bound to develop between those members of the Cabinet who fully realized the position and were willing to do what was necessary and those who refused to do so for Party reasons or were incapable of understanding the danger. There was not a moment to be lost. The May Report had made it clear that we were overspending in every direction and that the Budget would not balance. Drastic steps were needed to restore British credit, but these would obviously take time. The immediate problem was how the country was to tide over the interval, and this the Prime Minister clearly realized. Although he had a reputation for indecision on many occasions when he ought to have taken a firm line, which induced Mr. Winston Churchill on one famous occasion to describe him as the "Boneless Wonder", it is to his credit that this time he saw what had to be done and did not hesitate to do it, even though it meant the abandonment of many long-cherished schemes of social reform, and for himself ostracism from his Party. Nevertheless he made it clear that under no circumstances would he accept the mean-spirited and pusillanimous suggestion put forward by many of his supporters that the Government should resign and let other Parties bear the odium of doing what they themselves knew to be absolutely necessary. In other words, he refused, for mere Party considerations, to take the easy course of transferring to other shoulders the responsibility which he knew to be his.

All the same, the bitterness and hatred shown by the rank and file towards MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas equalled, if it did not exceed, anything

that has previously been known in public life. They were attacked with the utmost venom and vindictiveness, and were refused credit for the slightest sincerity, honesty or sense of public duty. The first time therefore the new National Government met, the atmosphere of the House of Commons was electric.

Such measures as could immediately be taken were rushed through. Cuts were imposed on salaries and expenditure in every direction, but it soon became apparent that these were not enough and that certain long-term economies would need to be undertaken. The new Government, however, felt it required a mandate from the people for such far-reaching measures. Consequently a General Election was decided upon, and I found myself again facing my constituents for the fifth and—as events turned out—the last time. On this occasion it soon became known that I was to have a straight fight, and that the Liberals did not propose to run a candidate of their own, but to leave the Liberal voters free to support the Government or the Opposition as they thought fit. A new Socialist candidate soon took the field in the person of E. J. C. Neep, another barrister and a likable personality, who fought throughout in a clean and sportsmanlike manner. This, unfortunately, did not apply, however, to many of his supporters, and the election was by far the most unpleasant and disorderly in which I had ever been involved. For the first time an attempt was made to break up my meetings by organized gangs, and I was compelled to threaten the formation of a trained body of stewards, who would, if need be, forcibly eject the interrupters. At the same time I never had the slightest doubt as to the result, because it was clear by now that the country overwhelmingly condemned the attitude of the Labour Party and fully realized the necessity for the most drastic measures in order to meet the situation. Never has the falsity of the Labour Party's claim that they alone represent the working classes of Britain been more fully demonstrated, for in the end they suffered the most overwhelming defeat that any political party has ever sustained, and in the Lowestoft Division, when the votes were counted, I found myself again returned by the largest majority that had ever been given to any parliamentary candidate in the history of the division.

The figures were:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|----|----|---------------|
| G. Rentoul (Con.) | ... | .. | .. | 22,886 |
| E. J. C. Neep (Soc.) | | .. | .. | <u>10,894</u> |
| Conservative majority | .. | | | 11,992 |

So the election was won, the Government having been given a "doctor's mandate" to take any measures they thought fit to cure the country of its malady without being tied down to any particular kind of treatment. In effect it meant, of course, a return to that Coalition form of Government which Disraeli declared England does not like and which some of us had helped to abolish less than ten years before. Such Coalitions are, however, inevitable in time of war and national crises and periods of reconstruction. Whether we shall ever again see a purely party government in our time is more than doubtful; all the same, any Coalition possesses certain inherent weaknesses. Whether in war or peace, it rests upon the basis of compromise—with the result that it is difficult to make drastic decisions, however desirable in themselves, if any substantial section of the Government

or the House of Commons disapproves. Because of this the Government had been unable to put any specific proposals before the country. As a result—although an unprecedented electoral triumph had been gained—no one was actually committed to anything. Indeed, the only point upon which the members of the new Government were agreed was as to the seriousness of the situation, and, presumably, as to their own competence to deal with it. Nevertheless, on almost every question of importance, the differences of opinion were far-reaching and fundamental: Free Trade; the League of Nations; Soviet Russia; the growth of Hitlerism; Disarmament; Socialism, and so forth—all remained matters of deep controversy and disagreement between the Conservatives on the one hand, who constituted four-fifths of the Government and the House, and on the other the Liberals and National Labour Members, as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's handful of adherents were named. Nevertheless it was impossible that action could be postponed indefinitely, especially as some of these questions had a direct bearing on the grave economic problems which the Government had been primarily formed to solve. Tariff Reform, for instance, had to be dealt with, for it was now clearer than ever that something must be done to safeguard home industry from unfair foreign competition, based to a large extent on subsidies and cheap labour.

As a strong supporter of Tariffs ever since Joseph Chamberlain first began his campaign in 1903, I felt some personal satisfaction in being a member of the House of Commons when this policy was finally carried into effect, although this question, like so many others, soon became of small consequence when compared with the vast issues of international politics and of life and death with which the country was confronted.

Once the Tariff question had been settled, the Government felt constrained to revert to the other outstanding matter: national economy. Certain economies were made in Snowden's emergency Budget, but these, it was argued, were no more than a beginning, and further far-reaching cuts in public expenditure were vigorously demanded. This led to the great economy campaign of 1932, in which, as related elsewhere, the 1922 Committee, of which I was chairman, played a prominent part. Following a demand by Mr. Neville Chamberlain that there should be some "hard thinking" by those members who believed in the necessity for further far-reaching economies, an unofficial committee of private Members was set up to investigate the whole question. After a careful survey, extending over many months, we submitted a report advocating a drastic curtailment of national expenditure, amounting to nearly £100,000,000. This, however, could not be carried into effect without seriously affecting the whole question of the social services, and without cutting across many deeply vested interests. Consequently, some of those who clamoured loudest for economy began to get cold feet as to the effect of such proposals—many of which were bound to be unpopular and therefore might possibly be detrimental to their own electoral prospects. For a time, therefore, as chairman of the inquiry, I was the target for a good deal of disagreeable criticism, and had to bear a large measure of personal responsibility for its inevitable unpopularity in certain quarters: indeed, this unpopularity was so great that in the end the whole economy campaign largely fizzled out. Nevertheless, the attacks upon me by certain newspapers and by just a few of my colleagues continued for some time. I was gratified, however, to receive the following letter from the Chancellor:

37 Eaton Square, S.W.1.
December 16th, 1932.

My dear Rentoul,

I am writing to say how concerned I have been at what seemed to me the very unfair attacks recently made upon you. I cannot help thinking that those Members concerned must by now feel rather ashamed of themselves about the whole matter; and I believe some of them are already anxious to show their feeling that you have been hardly treated. In any case I am quite sure that such annoyance as may have been caused to you will only be temporary, and that your reputation will not in any way suffer. The work you have undertaken has been most helpful to me personally.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) Neville Chamberlain.

As the new Government gradually settled down and gained an increasingly secure position throughout the country, as trade improved and unemployment decreased, and as public finances were stabilized, the position of the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, tended to become more and more shadowy. His health, too, began to show signs of deterioration; and his mental processes, which had long seemed a trifle confused, made him at times so muddled as to be almost incomprehensible.

Although we on the Conservative Benches recognized that MacDonald had played a patriotic and courageous rôle in the formation of the new Government; that he had performed an important service in persuading many Labour and non-party voters to support Conservative and National Government candidates, and that, as the result of his action, he and his two leading colleagues had been subject to a campaign of vilification, misrepresentation and abuse which passed all bounds of decency, yet it remained obvious that his usefulness had been largely exhausted, and that he was becoming more of a liability than an asset. This was apparently the feeling in the country, for in the General Election that followed soon after MacDonald was disastrously defeated at Seaham Harbour by Emanuel Shinwell; and although through the personal influence of Mr. Baldwin a seat was subsequently found for him, in the Scottish Universities, MacDonald was an embittered and disillusioned man, and died shortly afterwards on a cruise undertaken in a futile endeavour to regain his health and mental poise.

For me personally the national crisis and the repercussions resulting therefrom were to prove distinctly unfortunate. The widespread financial stringency led to equally widespread economies affecting not only public expenditure but all forms of private enterprise as well. As a result I soon found myself in a somewhat difficult position. The B.I.A. was compelled to curtail its activities, and my office as Chairman, which I had held for four years, inevitably came to an end. Furthermore, any hopes I might otherwise have had of obtaining office had very definitely receded owing to the formation of the National Government. Out of about seventy places very nearly half were allocated to the Liberals and to the National Labour supporters of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. This greatly narrowed the field of opportunity so far as the younger Conservative Members were concerned. The prospect, moreover, of endeavouring for the third time to try to build up a satisfactory



[Dave], Harrogate

THE AUTHOR
1916



[Elliott and Fry]

LADY RENTOUL

practice at the Bar did not appeal to me. It was therefore obvious that I must obtain, if possible, some position which would afford reasonable permanence and security, and for which I might be qualified by training and experience. For some of the more exalted judicial positions I realized that on strictly professional grounds my claims were not comparable with those of many of my legal brethren who had not immersed themselves in politics, but it seemed to me that if I were fortunate enough to be appointed a Metropolitan magistrate here was a position in many ways not less important, and certainly not less congenial. All the same, as it would mean the termination of my Parliamentary career and the severance from so many of my friends, both at Westminster and in my constituency, I hesitated some months before sending in my application. I did not disguise from myself that my heart was in the House of Commons, and if circumstances had permitted I would rather have remained a Back Bencher all my life rather than give it up. In spite of the stress and strain of politics, the long hours, the sacrifice of home life and leisure, the occasional ingratitude and misrepresentation of motives, and all the inevitable ups and downs which are entailed, politics and the House of Commons had become part of my life, and I never wanted any other.

It was therefore the most grievous and difficult decision I have ever had to make, but, situated as I was at the time, there seemed no practical alternative. Consequently, when a vacancy occurred through the sudden and much regretted death of J. A. R. Cairns, so well known and greatly respected as a magistrate, I applied for the position. My application was warmly and sympathetically supported by Mr. Baldwin, with whom I had fully discussed the matter, and by Sir Thomas Inskip, the Attorney-General, whose Parliamentary Private Secretary I had been for some time, and on January 4th, 1934, I learned that His Majesty had been graciously pleased to approve of the appointment. Although I was bitterly disappointed at thus being compelled to surrender so many of the interests and ambitions I had cherished for many years, let me say here and now that I have never regarded it as other than an honour and a privilege to sit on the Metropolitan Bench, or failed to realize that the work of a London stipendiary magistrate demands, and should receive, the very best that any man can give to it. No finer opportunity can be granted to anyone than to play his part in endeavouring to administer the law with impartiality and humanity and to dispense justice with mercy.

In retrospect there can be no doubt that the twelve years from 1922 to 1934, during which it was my good fortune to be a Member of Parliament, were as important and significant as our country has ever been called upon to face in the whole of its history, except during the supreme crisis of a world war.

As I have mentioned, the outstanding events were: the collapse of the Lloyd George Coalition and the return to power of a purely Conservative administration; the growth of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the advent of women Members; the troublesome period of post-war reconstruction; the first Socialist Government; the General Strike; the introduction of Universal Suffrage; the Bolshevik intrigue and the Zinovieff letter; the abandonment of the time-honoured policy of Free Trade; the financial collapse of 1931; the formation of the National Government; the beginnings of Hitlerism; the pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp of disarmament; and the question of Dominion status for India.

But what, of course, we did not realize was that throughout this period we were living on the edge of a volcano, which was threatening to engulf civilization itself. We certainly did not appreciate, for instance, that the whole democratic theory of government was on trial, and that the ideals of individual liberty of thought and action were being openly and secretly undermined in every part of the world. It is easy to be wise after the event; and no doubt there are many people today ready to suggest that during those years which "the locusts have eaten" Parliament was merely fiddling while Rome was burning. No doubt we ought to have paid more attention to the warnings of a few far-sighted men, particularly Winston Churchill; but as matters then stood, and so far as our limited knowledge went, all the questions to which we were devoting so much time were of first-class importance, judged by any normal or ordinary standard. Doubtless if we had known all that we know now, the course of events would have been shaped very differently.

CHAPTER VII

SOME PARLIAMENTARY MEMORIES AND "OCCASIONS"

It is difficult to say wherein lies the undoubted fascination of the House of Commons. The life of an M.P. who takes his job seriously is by no means an easy one; and his duties, it must be admitted, are at times extremely tedious; his expenses are heavy; his opportunities for recreation few; and more often than not he has to make material sacrifices of a kind of which the general public have little idea. Furthermore, no matter how conscientious he may be in the discharge of his duties, he need never expect more than superficial gratitude—if even that—from either his constituency or his party. The House itself is a restless and nerve-racking place, and, contrary to popular belief, possesses very few of the amenities of a "first-class club". Yet when it is in session the M.P. is expected to spend there most of his waking hours; he has little time for domestic or social life, and must continuously hold himself at the beck and call of the Whips. His weekends, more often than not, have to be spent in fulfilling a round of exacting engagements in his constituency; his correspondence is enormous, and the claims made on him mentally and physically—as well as financially—are unending.

Yet, in spite of all this, I have never met anyone who did not leave the House of Commons with regret and was not glad to return to it if opportunity offered. The explanation is to be found, I think, in its immense human interest; in the general spirit of camaraderie with which it is pervaded; in the opportunity it offers of rubbing shoulders with so many of the leading men of the day on more or less equal terms; in being brought close to great events, and the feeling that one is, as it were, sitting in the front row of the stalls with a chance sometimes of appearing on the stage and now and then playing a small part.

In its composition, the House of Commons may truly be regarded as a cross-section of the nation. It has 615 Members, who nowadays, since the advent of the Labour Party, are not only politically—but in their social circumstances—representative of every class of the community. As a result, there is among them an unsurpassed collective experience and practical know-

ledge often surprising in its scope and variety. Of course no one would expect to find in such an assembly, dependent entirely on popular election, more than comparatively few men of outstanding brilliance and genius. It may be said—I hope without offence—that most Members of Parliament are men of merely average intelligence and ability, and perhaps on that account all the better fitted for membership of a representative democratic body.

A Member of Parliament today is nothing like so important a personage as he was two or three hundred years ago, when he possessed rights and privileges that have long since disappeared. Payment of Members—however desirable and inevitable—has entirely changed the composition and character of the House of Commons.

And yet this payment is not, as many people imagine, a new development. It existed many centuries ago, when it was in the nature of a bribe, as apparently in those days no one wanted to be in Parliament if he could possibly get out of it. In the seventeenth century Members were paid on an even more generous scale than is the case today. For some time after that, however, the system fell into disuse, until it was restored in 1912. One consequence of the revival has been to give the public a sense of proprietary rights in the services of their Members which did not previously exist. It was a Cockney sportsman who remarked indignantly of his M.P.:

"It's the likes of hus that pays 'im £400 a year; and it makes me wild to think we could get a couple of fust-class 'alf-backs for the same money."

As the Mother of Parliaments is a very ancient lady, there are, of course, many quaint and peculiar things about her.

For instance, it often strikes people as curious that the one really silent Member of the House—who by custom and tradition is neither allowed to take part in the debates or even to vote—should be dignified by the name of "Speaker". This refers, however, to his position as the mouthpiece of the House of Commons on formal and ceremonial occasions. In bygone days it was the Speaker who had the responsibility of demanding from the King at the beginning of each new Parliament those rights and privileges which, step by step, the Commons had wrested from the Crown. The Speaker today holds a position of dignity, importance and honour. In rank he is the first commoner in the Kingdom and takes precedence over most of the peers. Like the King, he is supposed to have no politics. Although he has to have a constituency and be elected a Member of Parliament in the ordinary way, it is customary that his seat should not be contested and that, in any event, he himself—even during the election—should not descend to the rough and tumble of party conflict. This means, of course, that his constituency is virtually disfranchised for the time being, but it is seldom that any complaint has been made of that, in fact most constituencies regard it as an honour that their candidate should have been chosen to fill so exalted a position.

The chief responsibility of the Speaker is to regulate the conduct of debates and maintain Parliamentary decorum and order. As a result of the General Election of 1922, there was a considerable influx of Labour Members into the House of Commons, who had fought their way through the rough and tumble of party politics in the Trade Unions and elsewhere, and were not accustomed to the niceties and time-honoured restraints of Parliamentary procedure. Filled with a burning enthusiasm for their cause and a determina-

tion to put the world to rights, coupled with a not unnatural sense of their own importance, which every new Member shares to some extent, they presented Mr. Speaker Whitley with many delicate problems. At first feelings were apt to get out of control, and, in the heat of the moment, personal abuse and the imputation of unworthy motives to their opponents sometimes took the place of reasoned argument, and many stormy scenes ensued with which the Speaker had to deal. But this was only a passing phase, for very soon even the most fiery and excitable partisan learnt to adapt himself to the more decorous and restrained methods of Parliamentary debate, and indeed became as solicitous as anyone else to uphold the prestige and dignity of Parliament. But although certain phraseology is considered unparliamentary and will call forth a well-merited rebuke from the Speaker, this does not mean that Members are compelled to be mealy-mouthed, or that Parliamentary debate loses its vigour and punch: as a matter of fact it is not at all difficult to be as insulting as you please if only you go about it in the right way.

It is a great art to be able to say something particularly scathing which has all the appearance of a perfectly harmless and innocent observation. I was present on one occasion when, I regret to say, a well-known member of my own profession addressed the House in a somewhat inebriated condition. Whilst it was a painful performance, it was difficult to repress a smile when, in the course of his remarks, he repeatedly begged honourable Members to consider the matter "shoberly". What made it worse was that the debate happened to deal with the subject of licensing, which enabled the Member who followed to refer to the previous speaker as having been "full of his subject".

I remember Mr. Jack Jones, the somewhat truculent but good-hearted Labour Member for Silvertown, being called to order by the Speaker for using the word "liar" with regard to a prominent Member of the Front Bench. On withdrawing this word and substituting for it the statement that "the right honourable gentleman has handled the truth rather carelessly", he was considered to have kept within the bounds of Parliamentary decorum. This recalls an occasion when Mr. Arthur Balfour remarked of Gladstone that "never once during his speech did the right honourable gentleman *deviate* into accuracy". An Irish Member who described his opponent as "a murderous ruffian" was promptly called to order, but no objection seems to have been raised when he amended his words to "an excited politician".

One of the wittiest repartees I remember was some years ago, when a Member whose name I have forgotten made a personal attack upon Mr. Winston Churchill, whom he suggested was apparently suffering from beri-beri, as a sign of that obscure disease is a swollen head. Winston immediately rose and imperturbably pointed out that the honourable Member was mistaken, as swollen feet and not a swollen head was the sign of the disease.

"Exactly," replied his critic. "What I meant to convey was that you were too big for your boots."

When an Irish Member alluded to an opponent as the "gallant and very truthful Member", he was promptly called upon to withdraw the highly objectionable insinuation. This he did by immediately remarking: "Mr. Speaker, I readily withdraw the phrase 'very truthful'."

Another Member declared that certain statements of Mr. Neville Chamberlain "had been made to mislead the House and deceive the people". The

Speaker immediately interposed, and ruled that that was not a Parliamentary method of expression. The Member cleverly replied by saying:

"In view of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult to describe the conduct of the right honourable gentleman in Parliamentary language."

When a Member desires to address the House, he has sometimes to indulge for many hours or days in the pastime of trying to "catch the Speaker's eye", and frequently I have heard Members complain that they have been deliberately overlooked. But there is no doubt that every Speaker tries to discharge his difficult task with absolute impartiality. This is no easy matter nowadays, when at least six times as many Members wish to speak as there is time for, because unfortunately there is no limit to the length of a speech, and, furthermore, occupants of the Front Bench and Privy Councillors take precedence of private Members and can intervene whenever they think fit.

Apart from this, the Speaker calls alternately on supporters and opponents of whatever proposal may be before the House, but endeavours to see that all shades of opinion have a reasonable opportunity of making themselves heard. His choice is careful and deliberate, and to some extent it is assisted by lists of names of those wishing to take part in the debate, which are furnished to him beforehand by the Whips of the various parties.

In a word, he is the unquestioned arbiter and ruler of debates: he has to possess tact, dignity, impartiality, good temper and, if possible, a quick and witty tongue. Many a time an angry and tempestuous House has been quelled by some humorous remark of the Speaker, which has turned a snarl into a smile.

Sometimes people have asked what would happen if the Speaker made a mistake; to which Mr. Speaker Lowther (Lord Ullswater) made reply that such a supposition is impossible because the Speaker, like the Pope, is infallible.

Speakers of the House of Commons have often played a notable part in its historical development. Some time ago members of the B.B.C. Brains Trust endeavoured to answer the question as to what episode of history each would like to have been present at, if given the chance. Dr. Joad, as one might have expected from so distinguished a philosopher, chose the death of Socrates and the discussion which immediately preceded it on the immortality of the soul; Dr. Huxley thought he would like to have been present at the trial of Joan of Arc, and Commander Campbell, as a man of action, selected the assassination of Julius Caesar.

If I were given the choice, I should plump for the occasion when Charles I came in person to the House of Commons to arrest the five Members who had signed the Grand Remonstrance against the growing tyranny of the monarch.

One can picture the scene: the intense excitement that must have prevailed; the breathless messenger arriving with the news that the King himself was coming down Whitehall accompanied by a hundred men-at-arms; the tense atmosphere when, a few minutes later, Charles strides alone into the Chamber, and addressing the Speaker says:

"Mr. Speaker, I must borrow your chair for a moment." The Speaker, Lenthall by name, vacates the chair and drops on his knees. The King then orders him to point out the five recalcitrant Members, who had managed to escape by boat down the Thames a few minutes earlier. The Speaker, certainly not lacking in courage when one remembers the power of life and

death possessed by the Crown in those days, made the memorable reply that he had "neither eyes to see, nor ears to hear save as the House commands". Charles, nonplussed and baffled, glanced angrily at the excited Members, muttering, "Well, the birds seem to have flown." He then left the House, and thus began—to all intents and purposes—the Civil War.

In the House of Commons today there is still to be seen the Journal which was lying on the table in front of the Speaker's chair when the King entered. The Clerk of the House, though evidently as excited as everyone else, but no doubt feeling that some record should be made of this historic episode, wrote with fingers that, owing to emotion, could scarcely hold the pen:

His Majestie here entered ye Chamber.

This ancient document, now yellow with age, is still preserved in a glass case in one of the Division Lobbies.

But there is so much about the House of Commons that recalls the "storied" past, and constitutes its fascination and charm. Unfortunately my space is limited and I must pass on. A brief reference, however, to one or two "occasions" may be of interest.

The first great "occasion" in the life of any Member of Parliament is when he faces the ordeal of making his maiden speech. In days gone by it would have been considered immodest and pushful for a Member to venture to speak in the House before he had been there at least a couple of years. But nowadays, with the growth of the local Press and the increased interest taken by the electorate in their Member's activities, constituencies expect him to speak as often and at as great length as he possibly can.

One of the most successful maiden speeches of my times was made by a Member who happened to be what was known as the "Baby" of the House, that is to say, the youngest Member in it. Some experienced Parliamentary hand had given him the sound advice, not only to ask for the usual indulgence for his first attempt at a speech, but also to mention that he was the youngest Member. Needless to say, this had the desired effect; and he received encouraging cheers from every quarter. He was also wise enough to make only a very short speech. I do not remember what it was about, but there are two phrases which still stick in my mind. One was: "I'd be prepared to bet £100, Mr. Speaker, that I am right", and the other: "It's a damned shame that such a state of affairs should exist", or words to that effect. When he sat down he received an ovation worthy of a statesman who had saved the Empire several times over.

In my own case, I had been in the House of Commons for many months before venturing to plunge for the first time into these troubled waters; and even so I found the ordeal sufficiently terrifying. Indeed, I have never known anyone who did not face the prospect of a maiden speech with considerable anxiety. Yet the House is sympathetic with every Member addressing it for the first time, provided he has something to say and says it in a modest and unassuming manner. There is nothing it objects to more than being lectured by anyone, however eminent, and woe betide the man or woman who attempts it.

Most Members prepare their maiden speeches with the utmost care, even to the extent of writing them out verbatim and learning them by heart. One

Member, however, who took this precaution was so overcome with stage fright that, when called upon, he could not remember a single sentence, and had to sit down without uttering a word. Unfortunately for him, his former opponent seized the opportunity to issue a broadsheet throughout his constituency, bearing on the outside the title: "Maiden Speech of the new Borough Member, James Smith, Esq., M.P., delivered recently in the House of Commons", and the inside of the sheet was blank.

Another new Member wound up his maiden speech with a dramatic peroration, in which was the arresting phrase: "There is one thing none of us will forget, that England herself will never forget . . .", and then, after hesitating a moment or two, he abruptly sat down. Later, a sympathetic friend met him in the Lobby and said: "By the way, old man, what was it that none of us and England will ever forget?"

"I'm damned if I know," was the frank reply.

It is, of course, out of order for Members to read their speeches, though this rule nowadays is often more honoured in the breach than in the observance. I recollect an amusing occasion when a Member, recently elevated to the Front Bench, was obviously reading a speech that had been prepared for him, and the late James Pringle—an irrepressible obstructionist and free-lance—rose and asked the Speaker whether the right to read their speeches was reserved for inexperienced members of the Government. A quick-witted Conservative called out: "Do you never read yours?" to which Pringle replied somewhat pompously: "I certainly never do." "Nor does anyone else," was the immediate retort, and needless to say the House enjoyed the joke.

At all events I managed to avoid some of these pitfalls, and made a respectable—if somewhat dull—first effort welcoming certain provisions of the new Workmen's Compensation Bill, on behalf of the Lowestoft fishermen.

Although I spoke a fair amount during the succeeding years, I never managed to acquire a sufficient facility for Parliamentary debate, or perhaps a thick enough skin to encourage me to plunge often into those difficult waters. I always felt a reluctance to inflict myself—as a young Member must do if he wants to make headway—upon an assembly that did not in the least desire to hear me.

From the point of view of the rank and file, the most interesting and important period of the Parliamentary day is what is known as "Question Time". For one hour at the beginning of each day Members are permitted to question the Ministers regarding any matter of public or domestic importance, and it is astonishing how much this practice has developed.

Members of Parliament would now appear to be the most inquisitive people in the world; their thirst for knowledge is insatiable and amazing. The time spent by Government Departments in pandering to this craving is considerable. Nothing is too insignificant, no matter too sacred, to be made the subject of a question in the House; and the only loophole that a Minister of the Crown has is to give an answer of which the questioner cannot at the moment make head or tail—at which some Ministers are extremely skilful—or decline to answer at all on the ground that it would be contrary to the public interest.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that this interrogation of Ministers serves a useful purpose. Not only does it enable the private Member to provide his constituents with some proof that he is alive and active, but it is often the

only means of bringing to light matters of the utmost public importance, or of obtaining justice for some particular individual. Whether it is worth the expense involved; and whether some more effective and less expensive means might not be devised for attaining the same end, may be a matter of opinion. Before the war the Committee on National Expenditure reported that each question cost the country on an average about thirty shillings, so great is the time and labour involved in obtaining and compiling the required information. On the other hand, the right to put questions is one of the most treasured privileges of a private Member. Indeed, without it he would often be in danger of becoming a mere voting machine. It is even whispered that some politicians have clever secretaries who prepare for them a weekly list of conundrums, which they can hurl at the heads of unfortunate Ministers, and thus demonstrate to the world how active is the interest they are taking in public affairs.

In the Parliamentary Calendar Budget Day is an occasion of special interest and importance—both inside and outside the House of Commons. During my twelve years' membership I heard four Chancellors of the Exchequer open their Budgets: Stanley Baldwin, Philip Snowden, Winston Churchill and Neville Chamberlain. No four men were ever so widely different in personality, temperament or methods.

Baldwin and Chamberlain addressed the House on these occasions in the tone and manner of a company chairman speaking to a meeting of shareholders. They gave a straightforward, matter-of-fact statement of expenditure and income; there were no dramatics. Neville Chamberlain in particular, as a highly experienced man of business, handled figures with more assurance than any of his predecessors. Only once did he indulge in imagery, when he remarked: "We have finished the story of 'Bleak House', and are sitting down this evening to enjoy the first chapter of 'Great Expectations'."

Baldwin introduced only one Budget, as he was Chancellor of the Exchequer for a very few months, and the financial proposals it contained were not those he himself had shaped to any large extent; but, on the whole, I think he most nearly reached perfection in the manner of his presentation. It takes a man of exceptional qualities to give a Budget statement any degree of life and warmth, and to strike the happy mean between the rhetorical essay on the one hand and the dry-as-dust financial summary on the other.

From 1924 to 1931 the late Lord Snowden and Winston Churchill shared the Budget between them. Both were men of very different character and temperament: indeed, it was seven years of dramatic duels between them. On these occasions they fought like leopards; better entertainment was not to be had in London, and at times their cross-talk seemed almost too clever to be impromptu.

Winston Churchill's Budgets were by far the most spectacular, both in conception and delivery. Here are some of the things he did during his tenure of office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He put a tax on betting, which was short-lived, although it was the result of an exhaustive inquiry by a House of Commons Select Committee, of which I was a member. Although a good idea, the difficulties of collection proved insuperable, and evasion was widespread and extremely difficult to detect. He raided the Road Fund for over £7,000,000, and wangled an extra six months' duty out of the brewers. This

was all in one effort. On another occasion he grandiloquently abolished the Ministry of Transport, while we cheered him vociferously in the interests of national economy. But the axe did not fall, which perhaps was just as well in view of the traffic problems that have confronted us ever since. In a third Budget he put restrictive duties upon silk and other foreign imports, in complete defiance of all his previous Free Trade theories.

Churchill's Budgets were a queer mixture of literature and mathematics. It used to be said that the Treasury supplied the skeleton and the Chancellor breathed life into it.

In every Churchillian Budget there were picturesque phrases that remained in the memory. In proposing the silk duties, to which I have referred, and the restoration of the gold standard—another measure for which he was responsible—he invited the House to "linger awhile in the realms of silk and gold". Another time he talked slyly of "windfalls induced by a certain judicious shaking of the tree".

What a contrast to him was Philip Snowden; their outlook and temperament were so essentially different. Snowden introduced his Budget on a glass of water; Winston's refreshment was amber-coloured. At one point he paused. "I will now proceed to fortify the revenue," he remarked, and took a deep draught. Someone asked him whether it was brandy-and-soda, whisky-and-soda, cider or ginger ale. "I admit," retorted the Chancellor, "that it is difficult to distinguish between cider and ginger ale."

Certainly these two men did not mince words in their attacks on each other. Over the General Strike Winston accused Snowden of hiding in a hole till the strike was over and then blaming everybody afterwards. "I propose therefore," he said, "by way of a change, to administer some well-deserved chastisement." Among the charges he flung at Snowden were spite, callous levity, indolence and ignorance, etc., etc.

Snowden snapped in reply: "The subject is appropriate to the season; it is pantomime time."

Snowden himself was a curious individual: a thin, wizened little man, racked with pain from chronic arthritis as the result of a bad cycling accident in early life, hardly able to drag himself along on two sticks, he nevertheless managed to carry on a vast amount of work over a long period of years. At the same time his mind often seemed to be as twisted as his body, and he appeared to take a delight in saying bitter and wounding things which were quite uncalled for. One example of this curiously warped mentality occurred during a Budget discussion. Oliver Stanley, then a young Member, was addressing the House. He was arguing that the new taxation would tend to undermine credit, and suggested that if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had known more about business he would have realized this.

"Are you engaged in trade?" sneered Snowden.

"No, but I am in business," retorted Stanley.

"Yes, as a guinea-pig," snapped the Chancellor.

This was an inexcusable and offensive remark, especially as applied to a man like Stanley, and it caused considerable resentment. Winston Churchill immediately butted in chivalrously but unwisely, demanding on behalf of Stanley an immediate apology, and when this was not forthcoming, attempting to "report progress", a motion which the Chairman very properly refused to accept. Stanley himself continued his speech with dignity, quietly remarking that his friends on both sides of the House knew him too well to attach any importance to the Chancellor's ill-mannered remark.

A trifling incident perhaps, but typical of Snowden, and one which shows what a strangely irritable person he was.

There are one or two other political "occasions" I recall with pleasure, although they took place far away from the actual precincts of Parliament.

For instance, in 1924 I went with a party of M.P.s, at the invitation of the Government of Northern Ireland, to inspect the boundary that had recently been established between the "Six Counties" and what is now known as "Eire". At that time the embers of civil war were still smouldering, and it would have needed very little to fan them once again into flames. It was therefore hoped that if a few representative Members of the Imperial Parliament were to visit Northern Ireland and make an examination *in situ* it might lead to a more realistic appreciation of the inherent dangers of the situation.

It is difficult for people nowadays to realize the tremendous influence of what was called the "Irish Question" over the whole course of British politics for nearly half a century prior to the Treaty of 1922. In my own case I had been more or less brought up on it. Many of my family had lived all their lives on the borders of County Donegal and some of them had played a leading part in the troubles of earlier days. My father himself passed his boyhood there and for twelve years represented the Ulster constituency of East Down at Westminster. That was the time when the Irish Parliamentary Party under Parnell, Redmond, Healy, Dillon, and many other brilliant leaders largely dominated the British Parliament. "Home Rule for Ireland" was the one burning issue, often to the practical exclusion of everything else, and it will be remembered that it was the British Government's supposed preoccupation with Ireland that encouraged German aggression in 1914 and led to the First European War.

I was delighted, therefore, to have the opportunity of visiting for the first time towns and places which were already so familiar to me by name. The fact that we were also going to a part of the British Isles which had recently been the scene of bitter conflict and bloodshed and where only a spark was needed to set the country again in a blaze added to the interest and the excitement.

The delegation comprised the following eleven Members—seven Unionists and four Liberals: Viscount Curzon (U.), now Earl Howe; General Makins (U.); Viscount Ednam (U.), now Lord Dudley; George Balfour (U.); Colonel G. K. Mason (U.); The Hon. M. Barclay-Harvey (U.); and myself; whilst the Liberals were: Sir William Jowitt, K.C., Attorney-General in the first Socialist Government; Captain Reginald Berkeley; Colonel England; and Commander Fletcher (now Lord Winster).

In spite of political differences we formed a congenial and harmonious party. Starting from Belfast, we travelled the whole circumference of the Northern Irish territory. It is some indication of the troubled state of the country that for most of the time it was thought necessary for us to be accompanied by an armed police escort in bullet-proof cars. Pill-boxes, barbed-wire entanglements, machine-gun posts and concrete road barriers, which since September 1939 have lost their novelty for most of us but were then somewhat startling, dotted the countryside. Otherwise on the surface things looked peaceful enough, although there were many signs among the people we met of nervousness and apprehension.

Everywhere we were lavishly entertained by leading Ulstermen, but had

nevertheless plenty of opportunities to meet and talk with the common folk, whose sturdy patriotism and unshakeable determination to remain an integral part of the British Empire impressed even the most confirmed Home Rulers of our party.

I was particularly interested to visit Londonderry again because of the many family associations I have with that famous city, dating back nearly three hundred years, namely to the great siege of 1688. Indeed, one of my forebears, Gervais Squire, whose names I bear in accordance with an old family tradition, was Mayor of the city at that time and to a large extent the inspiration of its heroic defence.

In Hempton's *History of the Siege of Derry* the following lines are quoted from an unknown source as a tribute to a man whose "integrity and courage were far-famed throughout the land".

Up starts Buchanan, and thus boldly spoke,
"Take heart, good sir, ne'er fear the Irish yoke;
Receive the Earl of Antrim's regiment,
In peace and plenty rest yourself content."
Alderman Gervais Squire gave this reply—
"Sir, you're a traitor to our liberty,
Add to the English Crown, from whom we draw
Our right and title, charter and our law."

So it would seem that even in those days the wiles of the "appeaser" were not altogether unknown!

The whole tour was a memorable experience and one of which I have always retained the most vivid impressions. For a large part of the way we travelled through a veritable fairyland of green valleys, crystal lakes and leafy woods, so typical of the Emerald Isle. In striking contrast, however, to these beauties of Nature we were told many grim stories and reminded of many tragic episodes. We were shown, for instance, the spot where one whole family, father, mother and six children, were brutally murdered in cold blood because of their loyalist sympathies, as well as a village from which forty-three persons had been dragged out of their beds in the middle of the night and carried off as hostages to the mountains, where many of them died from cold and exposure. We visited a house in which an Ulster farmer and his family were besieged for over a month by forty Sinn Feiners who fired on them whenever they set foot out of doors. We saw the railway embankment where a British troop train was wrecked with heavy loss of life on the very day the King came to open the first Northern Ireland Parliament, and the sites of many other outrages. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if there was deep bitterness in the hearts of many of those we met, and if at times there were savage reprisals by the men of the North.

Nevertheless, we all returned with certain outstanding impressions, the first of which was that Ulster is far from being, as some people imagine, a mere agglomeration of narrow bigoted people whose loyalty is more or less a pose, but a compact, efficient and highly organized community of men and women whose aspirations and desires cannot be left out of account for a single moment in any decision affecting the interests of Ireland as a whole. In 1920 they were given a charter, which, as they believed, irrevocably decided their title to the Six Counties of Antrim, Donegal, Armagh, Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Londonderry, together with the two boroughs of Londonderry and Belfast.

It was hoped that by this means an end might at last be put to the long dispute, but unfortunately that much-to-be-desired result did not follow. A campaign of murder, arson and outrage was initiated by the Republicans of Northern and Southern Ireland, and for more than two years people lived under a system of terror almost equal to that of the Germans in the occupied countries of Europe. As a consequence the notorious Treaty was entered into by Mr. Lloyd George in 1922, Article 12 of which set up a Boundary Commission to decide the limits of the respective territories of North and South. It is obvious that what was contemplated was a mere adjustment of the existing boundary for the mutual convenience of both parties, but this is exactly what did not happen. Indeed, so far as the boundary was concerned, no real attempt at equitable revision was made and many glaring anomalies were left untouched. For instance, the height of absurdity was reached at one small village, where the dividing line was actually drawn down the centre of the main street, so that one side of it lay in the Free State and the other in Northern Ireland. This entailed all kinds of formalities, even if a villager wished to cross the road, and there were tariffs and other complications as well. On the Free State side of the street, for example, a pair of boots cost five shillings more than on the other side, and a postcard despatched from the Ulster side went for a penny, whilst a penny halfpenny stamp was required across the road.

Today, unfortunately, the prospect of a united Ireland is more remote than ever, owing to the attitude adopted by the Southern Irish during the war. We must assume, therefore, that partition, with all its anomalies and absurdities, is likely to remain for a long time to come, and an unequalled opportunity to promote Irish unity has been lost through the fanatical intransigence of Mr. de Valera and his followers.

Our second outstanding impression was a tremendous feeling of admiration for the gallant men and women of Ulster, who had suffered so much. None of us had any doubt of their intense loyalty to the King and the British connection, or that their determination to remain an integral part of the British Isles had become an inflexible article of faith. Even the Liberal members of our party were obviously impressed by this patriotic fervour and the almost fanatical devotion of Ulster men and women towards Great Britain and the Empire.

Another "occasion" I like to recall is of a lighter kind. This was when the Conservative Central Office took the bold step of chartering the White Star liner *Doric* for a cruise to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. Although the Labour Party had done this kind of thing on several occasions with profit and pleasure, it had never before been considered as *comme il faut* in Conservative circles, and some of the older Members of Parliament were frankly shocked by the idea that the Party organization should thus transform itself into a glorified tourist agency. Others, however, thought the undertaking was highly to be commended provided they themselves were not called upon to take part in it, and in the end I was the only Member of Parliament who joined the cruise, although a very large number of my colleagues afterwards expressed their regret that they had not done so. Apparently the prospect of being cooped up on an ocean liner with some eight hundred enthusiastic Conservative workers, whether from their own constituencies or any others, was too much for them, in spite of the fact that Mr. Baldwin took the liveliest interest in the enterprise and sent us a charming message of goodwill on our

departure. As a matter of fact the scheme proved to be an immense success from start to finish. Instead of living in an atmosphere of politics morning, noon and night, as had been feared, by common consent the holiday spirit prevailed throughout and political discussions were altogether barred.

Wherever we landed the greatest interest and excitement was displayed by the local population, and representatives of the Press were waiting everywhere *en masse* to greet us. At Lisbon we had the satisfaction of being described as "*figuras eminentes da politica inglesa*", whilst the people of Algiers prided themselves on welcoming a "*caravane distingué d'hommes politiques anglais*".

Under the circumstances it devolved upon Sir Philip Stott (who had founded the Bonar Law College for Conservative workers), Sir Robert Topping (Chief Agent) and myself to act as spokesmen for the party, and at every port our expressions of appreciation were duly reported by the Portuguese, Spanish and French newspapers as political pronouncements of first-class importance. At Gibraltar, too, we had a great reception and were privileged to lay a wreath on the War Memorial in the presence of the military authorities and local notabilities. Whilst the cruise was regarded as a notable experiment, I am sorry to say it is one that has never been repeated, yet I am sure it did an immense amount of good in bringing together all classes of Conservatives in the informal atmosphere that prevails on board ship and in promoting a friendly understanding and *esprit de corps*, and might do much to counteract that corroding spirit of apathy which is the besetting sin of the Conservative Party.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM ONE WAR TO ANOTHER

Our voices take
A sober tone; our very household songs
Are heavy with a nation's griefs and wrongs;
And innocent mirth is chastened for the sake
Of the brave hearts that nevermore shall beat,
The eyes that smile no more; the marching feet.

WHITTIER.

ALTHOUGH this is in no sense a war book, my story would be incomplete unless I made some reference to the repercussions of two world wars on my own life and career. In a general way more than enough has been written about both these wars from every angle by those who are able to speak with first-hand knowledge and authority. This I cannot do, as I was never an actual combatant, nor even had the experience of being under fire except such as I shared with millions of other Londoners during the air-raids of 1940 and 1941.

When the First World War began in August 1914 I was a young barrister of seven years' standing, and just beginning to get my foot firmly planted on the professional ladder. My start had been a slow one, but this of course is not an uncommon experience at the Bar. In my first year I made the magnificent sum of fifteen guineas, in the second year fifty-seven and in the third one hundred and eighty-one. By 1912, however, I was earning about £500 a year, and, better still, had been brought into touch with one or two

solicitors in a large way of business, so that my prospects at the time seemed fairly bright.

In 1912 another event had also taken place which marked a definite milestone in my life: my marriage.

My wife was the daughter of Harold Smart, a director of the Deutsche Bank, and the only Englishman ever to hold that position. He died later that same year at the early age of fifty-three. He was one of those who could never bring himself to believe in the possibility of war between Britain and Germany, and I think the event would have broken his heart, as it meant the complete extinction in this country of the great financial institution with which his whole life had been associated. Looking back, it seems strange that a clever banker and a shrewd man of business should have been so blind regarding the dark forces at work in Germany, with which country he had many close associations.

At the outbreak of war, therefore, I was thirty years of age, married, and had a practice which, although not a large one, had shown each year a satisfactory increase. A European war was something altogether outside the bounds of our experience, and it was difficult for a young professional man who had given hostages to fortune to know where his duty lay.

To rush off immediately and volunteer for war service might seem praiseworthy and patriotic, but with the recruiting offices swamped by the numbers of those waiting to join up, it would have been a grave responsibility in the early days of the First World War to disregard all one's obligations and leave one's dependants to manage as best they could. Moreover, the accepted slogan at the time was "business as usual", and consequently it seemed the wise and prudent thing to carry on for the time being with my professional work and do what I could in my spare time to assist the war effort. Whenever, therefore, I was free to leave the Temple I engaged in such war-time activities as offered themselves.

These were somewhat varied. During the first few months I put in many hours a week with the British Red Cross Society, in what was known as the Enquiry Department for the Wounded and Missing. I also joined a volunteer training unit for Home Defence known as the "Old Boys' Corps", being largely confined to professional men who had been at one or the other of the public schools or universities. Later on, having been rejected for active service overseas, I was granted a Cadet Commission in the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Cadets; and finally, when no longer able with a clear conscience to continue in private practice at the Bar, I became a full-time legal assistant at the War Office, and subsequently served for nearly three years as legal adviser to the Eastern Command, with the rank of captain. In each of these capacities I made many good friends, acquired a certain amount of useful experience, and had the satisfaction of feeling that, so far as lay in my power, I was doing my bit.

The inception of the Enquiry Department of the Red Cross is interesting. From very small beginnings it developed into a wonderful organization, able to bring comfort and hope to many hundreds of thousands of wives, mothers and sweethearts.

Conditions in the First World War were very different from those in the

Second, particularly during the early stages. In 1914 there was no organization developed in peace-time and based on past experience to meet the contingencies of war, and indeed very little understanding, at first, of the problems which had to be faced.

Of course in some ways the situation was easier. There were no widespread air-raids or indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population. On the other hand, there were military casualties on a scale which up to now we have been spared in the present struggle. Indeed, in 1914 the only vivid signs of war to be seen in the London streets—apart from a number of men in khaki—were the silent, swift-moving ambulances of the British Red Cross Society.

But in France the situation was appalling. In one week during September 1914 over 20,000 wounded—many of them cases of the utmost gravity—were hurried into Boulogne, one of our main clearing stations. There were at that time no hospital trains in France, no motor ambulances, no field dressing-stations, no adequate supplies—nothing but truck trains without brakes, in which the wounded, lying on dirty straw and without medical attention, were jostled and jolted for long days and nights at a time. Beneath the gilded plaster, painted ceilings and brilliant electric chandeliers, amid the oval mirrors and gold cupids of the Kursaal at Boulogne, which had been converted at almost a moment's notice into an emergency hospital, the doctors and nurses worked in a manner beyond praise. And in this hospital—only one of many—the men waited to be embarked in the hospital ships which, under the protection of the Royal Navy, carried them across the Channel in almost unbroken procession.

It will be easily understood how difficult it was under such conditions to obtain particulars, or to keep a record of the identity of these unfortunate men, who came indiscriminately from almost every unit of the B.E.F. The hospital staffs were worked to death, and the relations and friends at home were almost crazy with anxiety. But this was not the whole story. In addition to the wounded there were thousands of others who could not be traced at all, and nobody seemed to have the faintest idea what had become of them.

In the early days of the tragic retreat from Mons, a distracted mother was allowed to go to France, in order to make inquiries for herself about her only son who was missing. It was autumn, and the leaves were beginning to turn; but instead of the beautiful autumn tints, fallen trees and burnt-up scrub and heather marked the ruthless march of the Germans as they pursued the Allied forces towards the Marne. The mother could find nothing; she asked questions at the Mairie, of the schoolmistress, and of anyone else she could find in the desolate villages she passed through; she peered at every little wooden cross which marked a soldier's grave—some with pencilled inscriptions and others with no mark at all—but she found nothing, and her search ended at some German words hurriedly written on the bark of a blasted tree: "Here lie the bodies of many soldiers who perished on the field of battle."

So her search was in vain, she could learn nothing of her only son: he was simply "missing".

It was just because of the uncertainty of cases like these that the sympathetic imagination of Lord Robert Cecil (now Lord Cecil) conceived the idea

of what afterwards became one of the largest—and by no means the least valuable—of the many departments of the Red Cross.

We established our headquarters in Norfolk House, St. James's Square, which was kindly lent by the Duke, and a staff of about two hundred men and women set to work under the inspiring leadership of Miss Gertrude Bell, the famous traveller and explorer. No sooner had a hint of the existence of this branch of the Red Cross appeared in the columns of the daily Press than long files of mourners visited the new department, to try and get some scrap of news about sons, husbands or brothers who were lost. Thither came letters and telegrams by the score and soon by the thousand, all burdened with the same piteous refrain: "Where is he? Have you any news?"

During the time I was there I dealt personally with hundreds of letters from every rank in life, almost from every corner of the Empire, many of them written with the true eloquence and lofty simplicity which overwhelming sorrow seems to give even to the humblest. It was these letters which made the work seem well worth while and gave it an intense human interest. They provided clear proof how essential it was that someone should undertake the task of endeavouring to trace the missing and wounded men, especially as bogus societies were already springing up, fraudulently professing to discover the whereabouts of these men in return for a monetary reward.

In addition to working at Norfolk House, most of my evenings and week ends were spent with the "Old Boys' Corps", which was a unit of what was known as the V.T.C. (Volunteer Training Corps), the forerunner in the First World War of the present Home Guard.

One cannot help contrasting the reception accorded to the latter organization with the kind of treatment we received in the autumn and winter of 1914-15. We certainly did not bask then in the sunshine of official recognition. Indeed, the official hierarchy, the Colonel Blimps of those days, regarded the efforts, however well-meaning, of a lot of amateurs as presumptuous nonsense. At first everything was done to discourage us; but as the months passed, and the situation grew more serious, there was a notable change, and in the end the volunteers were recognized as a valuable part of our defence forces, just as the Home Guard are today, and in addition sent thousands of partially trained men to the front line, whilst the rest gave much-needed relief to the Territorial and other units guarding our shores. All the same, quite a lot of water had to flow under the bridge before this point was reached.

As with the Home Guard in its early days, uniforms and rifles were at first out of the question. But of course this could not be helped, as there were insufficient even for the fighting forces. Later on we were graciously permitted to purchase an out-of-date rifle and a uniform for ourselves, provided it could not possibly be mistaken for that worn by the Regular or Territorial Army. The authorities were most insistent about this. No badges of rank were allowed, and we were also compelled to wear an official armband, so that no one would make the mistake of taking us seriously.

Nevertheless nothing could damp our ardour, and we drilled every evening in Regent's Park, although even permission to do this was not easily obtainable, and was only granted on our undertaking in writing that we would not damage the turf nor interfere with the children's playing-fields. In fact there is no doubt that for some months we were considered very much of a

nuisance. Yet it seemed impossible to obtain recognition—or even an intimation of goodwill—from the powers that be. In spite of this, however, the "Old Boys' Corps" in a few weeks was over a thousand strong.

Admission to our ranks was confined to ex-public schoolboys and university men, and we considered ourselves rather a "*corps d'élite*". The "old school tie" spirit thoroughly permeated our organization. I dare say we were inclined to be a trifle snobbish, but all the same it gave the O.B.C. a character of its own, and added much to its social amenities. In our ranks were barristers, doctors, artists, writers, journalists, engineers, civil servants and men connected with every phase of business activity. Among our earliest recruits were A. A. Milne, Reginald Croom-Johnson (now a judge), R. A. Scott-James, Lord Teynham, Sir Bartle Frere, Fletcher Moulton, K.C., and C. J. Stewart, the Public Trustee.

Very soon we established—at our own expense, of course—a permanent camp at Wembley Park. We purchased some old railway carriages as huts, and with our own hands installed lighting and heating. We made a parade ground out of a marshy field, and built a miniature rifle range, and there we repaired every week-end for intensive training, sleeping in camp from Friday evening until Monday morning. There was no doubt about our keenness, even though the refusal of the War Office to grant us official recognition was a constant grievance. As uniforms were difficult to obtain, we remained for some time in semi-mufti, on the principle that half a uniform is better than none at all. A sentry, however, in khaki tunic and breeches and a green Homburg hat was a somewhat curious sight! Of course we had to face a good deal of chaff and ridicule, and gained for ourselves such nicknames as the "Friday Nighters" and the "Gorgeous Wrecks" (Georgius Rex) from the initials "G.R." on our brassards.

It is these memories which make one realize how different was the treatment accorded to the Home Guard. Of course the situation, when it was formed, was much more desperate. The British Expeditionary Force had miraculously escaped from Dunkirk; but invasion was expected almost hourly, and a *levée en masse* was Britain's answer. All the same, there were similar problems in regard to arms and equipment, and the Local Defence Volunteers, as they were called until Mr. Winston Churchill happily rechristened them the Home Guard, drilled and paraded, as we did in 1914, with Crimean muskets, old-fashioned rifles, blunderbusses, shotguns, and even sticks and umbrellas. At first it was officered, as we were, largely by dug-outs—long-retired admirals and generals, with outworn ideas of discipline and tactics—but very soon these initial difficulties were overcome, and the Home Guard was able to take its place as an integral part of the armed forces of the country.

After serving for some time with the O.B.C., I was asked to take charge of a company of boy cadets belonging to the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Cadet Battalion. This opened up a new line of experience. My particular Company had its headquarters in a somewhat unsalubrious part of Islington known as Barnsbury Road, and most of the boys came from the immediate neighbourhood and were of the roughest type. They were, moreover, at a difficult period of their lives, as their ages ranged from sixteen to nineteen.

It was, however, an eye-opener to find how soon even the roughest of them responded to the modicum of military discipline we were able to impose, what a marked improvement was effected in their demeanour and appearance

by the wearing of uniform, and how generally beneficial was this new influence in their lives.

In addition to the rudiments of military drill, we taught them to shoot as well as signalling, map-reading and first aid, and almost every week-end there were route marches, field exercises and parades. Once or twice a year the whole battalion went into camp for a few days, generally at Haileybury College, which was kindly lent to us for the purpose during the school holidays. It can well be imagined what a treat it was for those boys—many of whom came from slum areas—to enjoy for a time all the amenities of a first-class public school.

I have no doubt that, quite apart from war, the cadet movement is of the greatest value to the youth of the country, and that the Labour Party never made a bigger mistake than when, before the war, they endeavoured to obstruct and oppose its development on the plea that it fostered a militaristic spirit. Even if this had been true—which was certainly not my experience—the social value far outweighed any such hypothetical disadvantages. On the contrary, the cadet training inculcated a spirit of self-respect and sense of discipline and *esprit de corps* which could not be taught so easily in any other way. In addition, we sent hundreds of boys to serve in His Majesty's Forces, and instead of joining up as raw recruits they did so as partially trained men. Many of them speedily proved their worth by becoming first-rate N.C.O.s, and several succeeded in getting a commission. It was hard work, as I used to spend almost every evening at the Company headquarters, which was also in effect a social club, and of course most week-ends were occupied with parades and exercises. But I certainly never did anything that seemed to me better worth while or yielded more satisfactory results.

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These were, however, purely part-time activities, and by the end of 1915 I came to the conclusion it was impossible for me to continue with my ordinary work at the Bar when so many others similarly placed were sacrificing everything for the national cause. I decided, therefore, that I must devote my whole time to the war effort, no matter in how small or humble a way.

But I soon discovered that this was easier said than done, and that for anyone like myself the war was a difficult one to get into!

However, after many fruitless enquiries, I was finally taken on as a legal assistant at the War Office, although at a more or less nominal rate of remuneration. This entailed a heavy inroad on my extremely limited resources in order to meet current liabilities, but I had at all events the satisfaction of feeling that I was doing what I could.

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The War Office is a curious place, and one which it is always easy to criticize, but, so far as my experience went, much of the criticism was ill-founded. The Civil Service—and it was with the civilian rather than the military side of the War Office that I was chiefly associated—has often been a particular target for criticism. How often have we heard scornful jibes regarding its alleged indolence, inefficiency and fondness for red tape. But I must say that I found the War Office civil servants with whom I came in contact extremely hard-working, capable, courteous and conscientious.

It must be remembered that a certain amount of so-called "red tape" is essential to the efficient conduct of any large business such as that of a

Government department. For example, the much abused "Minute" system is an excellent one, provided it is not overdone. What it means in practice is that every matter is dealt with on a separate file with an official number, so that it can be readily traced, and whenever these files are sent from one branch or department to another, they pass through a central registry, where the number and destination are noted. Every action taken or suggested is "minuted" on the file by the individual or official concerned, thus providing a complete up-to-date history of the case for the information of anyone into whose hands the file subsequently comes.

It is true that sometimes needlessly verbose dissertations are written on a file about matters that could be settled in five minutes by a personal interview. It has even been facetiously suggested that some of the stock phrases and Minutes possess a hidden meaning for the initiated, as for example:

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| Under consideration | .. | Never heard of it. |
| Under active consideration | .. | Will have a shot at finding the file |
| For action when necessary | .. | I do not know what you are supposed to do: anyway, it is your pigeon |
| The Office of Works has got this in hand | .. | You had better try to do the job yourself. |
| Kindly expedite your reply | .. | For God's sake try to find the papers. |

But this is, of course, a base slander and on the whole the system is one which makes for clarity and efficiency.

Most of my colleagues in the legal department were fellow members of the Bar. There was Sydney Turner (now a well-known K.C.), who later succeeded me as Recorder of Sandwich; F. W. Beney, K.C.; H. G. Stebbing, and a number of others. Our job was to examine and advise on the numerous compensation claims for land and property commandeered by the War Department, and also in respect of damage caused by the troops to billets and other buildings, as well as occasional appearances on behalf of the War Office before the War Compensation Court.

Although this work was interesting enough in its way, a great deal of clerical routine was involved, so that I was very glad when about twelve months later, through the good offices of my cousin, Major C. W. Brighten,—who was at the time Command Land Agent to the Eastern Command—I was transferred there as legal adviser. In this new job I had more opportunity of outside work, investigating claims on the spot, interviewing and exercising a general supervision over the work of the War Department land agents, surveyors and valuers in charge of local districts. As this involved frequent visits to military encampments, A.A. batteries and defended areas, I was given the rank and emoluments of a captain on the general staff. With this work, which was full of interest, I carried on until demobilized in November 1920—exactly two years after the Armistice. Thus, in addition to playing a small part in the war effort, I had the satisfaction of doing a job in which such legal training and experience as I possessed could be turned to practical use.

When I returned to the Bar it meant having to start entirely afresh, as I had been out of touch with the Temple for nearly four years. But this did not worry me in the least, as in those days we were all full of optimism regarding the future. The war was over and "peace in our time" was assured, so we

fondly believed. The Allied victory was final and complete, and certainly neither I nor anyone else—so far as I know—had the nightmare vision that in less than a quarter of a century we should again be fighting the same enemy in yet another war far more terrible than the last.

The question has often been asked by some of the younger generation how these two wars compare in regard to such matters as rationing, loss of amenities and the general conditions of civilian life. It is a question very difficult to answer, because so much has happened since that the First World War seems extremely far away, and one's memory has become blurred and hazy as to the conditions then prevailing.

There is, of course, not much doubt that in the Second World War we learnt a great deal from the experiences of the past; but, on the other hand, the whole situation was much more difficult on the second occasion than on the first. Hitler had overrun the greater part of Europe, and so long as he remained firmly fixed on the shores of France, Belgium, Holland and Norway, we were cut off from many valuable sources of supply which in the First World War had been fully available.

But, apart from such material considerations, the great difference was that, owing to air attacks, civilians were for the first time brought into the front line. In all previous wars it was the soldier who had done the fighting, and exposed himself to the dangers and perils of war, whilst the civilian lived a more or less sheltered life—far behind the front line. This had been the case throughout the war of 1914-18, except for a few sporadic tip-and-run air-raids, in which a small number of civilians had lost their lives. But from 1939 onwards these conditions entirely changed, and, as everyone knows, at certain times and places—both in our own and enemy countries—the civilian population, owing to attacks from the air, actually had to face greater danger than the fighting men. In Britain, for instance, during the first two years of the Second World War the number of civilians killed or wounded considerably exceeded those of the Army itself. We learnt for the first time the meaning of "total war", and I believe this led to a definite psychological change in the attitude towards each other of both soldier and civilian. They were each far better able to understand the other's point of view; and, as a result, there was a truer sympathy and comradeship between all classes. That, to my mind, was the biggest difference between the two wars, apart from the fact that the second was more truly a "world war" and the material sacrifices demanded from the whole population were infinitely greater.

Although I might not have said it at the time, looking back I am glad that circumstances compelled me to be in London throughout the Blitz of 1940-41; it was an experience I certainly would not have missed.

I had often wondered—as no doubt most people have at times—how I should behave in a situation of imminent personal danger. In the autumn of 1940, and on many subsequent occasions, we in London had ample opportunity of finding out. No one who lived through those grim days and nights will ever forget them, although they now seem strangely distant and shadowy.

I will not deny that, like most people, I often felt very frightened, but I think one's chief preoccupation was not to show it, and certainly the manner in which all classes of the community faced their nightly ordeal from the air was something that had to be seen to be believed.

It was curious also to observe one's own psychological reactions to night bombing. In the First World War—when it was only occasional and nothing like so severe—I lay awake and shivered; but in the second I was not nearly so alarmed, and soon began to accept it, like most other people, as part of the day's work. Whether one had become more philosophical or fatalistic I do not know, or whether it was due to the subconscious feeling that the chance of a direct hit was about the same, as someone put it, as that of winning the Irish Sweep. Anyway, we Londoners gained throughout the Blitz a great reputation for bravery, although as a matter of fact there was not much else to be done but stick it. Everyone realized that we had got to see the war through to a victorious end—there was no tolerable alternative.

So hardened did some people become that it gave rise to a new definition of a bore, viz., a man who insisted on telling you about his bomb when you wanted to tell him about yours. All the same it was a pretty grim time while it lasted.

Saturday, September 7th, 1940, is a date deeply engraved on my memory. How well I remember the porter at our block of flats knocking at the door and saying: "There's a terrible fire in the East End. Would you care to go up on the roof and have a look at it?"

I knew that an Alert had been sounded, and had heard a certain amount of gun-fire in the distance, but we had become used to that. Daylight raids were a commonplace, and no one paid much attention to them unless the danger seemed imminent.

I rushed to the roof, whence on a clear day one could see twenty miles or more in any direction, and looked towards the east. There an enormous cloud of black smoke extended for miles and reached thousands of feet up into the sky. Occasionally, in the heart of the cloud, could be seen a dull red glow which at times became more intense and then died away. It seemed to be somewhere beyond the Houses of Parliament, to the left of Big Ben, but exactly where was difficult to tell. Later we learned it was in the dockland area. There was no doubt, however, that a colossal fire had been started, the largest seen in London for nearly three hundred years, and that this attack was on an altogether different scale from anything London had hitherto experienced.

By that time the German 'planes had been driven off, but it was only too obvious that many of them had got through and already dropped their loads of death and destruction. About 8.30 the same evening the sirens wailed again, and then it was that London began its first real night of hell. Meanwhile I had paid another visit to the roof as twilight was falling. It was a glorious evening, and the cloudless blue sky was tinted red and gold with the hues of a magnificent sunset. In the east, however, the pillar of cloud had now changed into a pillar of fire, which was to serve as a beacon to the further messengers of death who were already on their way. The docks were burning fiercely, warehouses filled with valuable stores of food were blazing; the glow seemed to be engulfing the whole of the East End. Indeed, it looked as though London was doomed.

In the tea-time raid it was estimated that fully five hundred German 'planes took part, and that a similar number came over in the terrible eight hours of the night which followed. At all events the Germans themselves boasted that they dropped over one thousand tons of high explosives as well as hundreds of thousands of incendiaries. There is no question, it was one of the most ferocious and devastating assaults ever made on a civilian population

up to that time. Later on, however, there were even worse raids to come, though none of them comparable with what Germany herself was one day to endure.

The destruction was enormous: a few military objectives had been hit, but the main damage was to the homes of the people; to schools, hospitals, churches and recreation centres. That night 306 people—most of them women, children and elderly civilians—were killed and 1,400 injured; but London was only scratched. In considerable anxiety I went up to the roof again in the early morning, and to my astonishment there was London stretched out before me sparkling in the sunlight, apparently unchanged after the terrible night: not a single important building was missing from the skyline.

This was the pattern of London life throughout that exceptionally beautiful autumn of 1940. The next night—and every succeeding night for nearly three months as soon as darkness fell—the attack was renewed. At first it was the East End that was the main target, because Hitler believed that in the poorer areas of London morale was weakest; but he little knew the true Cockney spirit. The East Enders took everything he could do with truly unconquerable courage.

When it became clear that the people of the East End were not going to panic, the Germans turned their attention to other parts of London. The next place to be attacked was the City's square mile; but although historic buildings such as the Guildhall, the Livery Companies' Halls and many of Wren's beautiful churches were destroyed, the loss of life was comparatively small, because few of the City's daytime population resided there at night.

After that it was the turn of the West End: Oxford Street, Bond Street, Piccadilly, Berkeley Square and Park Lane were thoroughly pestered. Great stores like those of John Lewis were burnt out; Selfridge's, Waring's, Bourne & Hollingsworth's and many others were severely damaged, but the morale of the people never wavered, and London carried on.

Of all the devastation caused by the brutal and senseless raids of the Luftwaffe on non-military objectives, the most saddening to me was the Temple. It meant the destruction of so many personal links with the past. The Middle Temple Hall, where *Twelfth Night* was first performed in Shakespeare's own days, with its magnificent vaulted roof, mellow panelling and stained-glass windows, has been badly if not irreparably damaged. The priceless oak screen, said to have been carved from the wood of the Spanish Armada, was burned to cinders and can never be replaced. The Library also suffered severe damage, whilst in the Inner Temple both Hall and Library were completely destroyed.

Great damage was done to the famous Temple Church, and innumerable buildings associated with great legal figures of the past and outstanding episodes in English history are no more.

Of my own chambers at 2 Harcourt Buildings, where I spent over twenty years, only the outer walls remain.

My windows looked out on the Inner Temple Gardens, where York and Lancaster plucked the roses and hurled defiance at each other. Today no less than four large craters pock-mark what was once a lawn as smooth and green as a billiard table and where even the appearance of a single daisy was regarded as an unwarrantable intrusion.

In the First World War it was worn bare by being used as a parade-ground for the Inns of Court Volunteers. Today again there is scarcely a blade of grass left and a barrage balloon with hutments and equipment occupy most of the space.

Grown Office Row, where Thackeray had his chambers and Charles Lamb was born, is gone. Fig Tree Court, where Mr. Asquith received his first guinea brief, and where Lord Lyndhurst and the crafty Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, had their chambers, is a mere heap of dust and rubble. Old Pump Court, where my father had his chambers for more than a quarter of a century, has more or less vanished, although Hare Court, immediately adjacent, has, strangely enough, escaped. It was here that the notorious Judge Jeffreys had chambers, also Wolfe Tone, who himself died on the gallows. In Gray's Inn, too, there is widespread devastation. The ancient Hall in which I was "called" to the Bar has been burned out, and even the statue of Lord Bacon was tumbled from its pedestal, and looked most awkward and forlorn.

One's personal memories of this grim period are kaleidoscopic in the extreme. We were living in Kensington at the time, and there was one night, for instance, when, after the bombs had been falling all round us for some hours, the telephone bell rang violently about 10.30 p.m. It was some old friends who lived out Brondesbury way.

"Sorry to bother you, but a land-mine has just come down quite close to us, and the back of our house has gone. Could you take us in for the night if we came over? I think the car is O.K."

"Of course; come along at once," I replied.

"Right you are—I won't stop now. Things are pretty thick out here—many thanks."

Then a hasty scramble round to find extra mattresses, and a council of war as to where everyone could sleep. It must, of course, be in the passage, the bedrooms were not safe from flying glass, but we would manage somehow. Meanwhile the bombs were clumping down in rapid succession and the guns blazing away. Presently the 'phone bell rang again.

"I say, old man, on second thoughts, it still seems pretty heavy down your way, and as we should be coming straight into it, perhaps it would be better to go to D.s at Water End for the night. We should at all events be getting farther out. What do you think? What do you say? It's rather noisy, I can't hear; that's better; they've stopped for the moment."

"Yes, I think you are wise. If, however, you change your minds, just turn up any old time."

That was that; and it was as well they did not come, for I had hardly rung off when—Whish, Bloomp—the building swayed like a poplar in a high wind and all the lights went out; there was a sound of falling masonry and broken glass, which proved to be caused by a direct hit just over our heads by a medium-sized bomb. We were on the ground floor, and fortunately for us it only penetrated three of the seven floors overhead. In the pitch dark we groped round for candles, shook ourselves to make sure we were all right, and then rushed upstairs to see if we could be of any help. From one of the flats the bomb had struck water was pouring out under the front door and down the main staircase. Luckily the occupants had gone to a shelter in the basement of an adjoining block. It was not an easy matter to turn the water off, and for some minutes we were in danger of being flooded out.

We discovered a little later that two people had been killed by the same

stick of bombs in the flat immediately opposite us, whilst just round the corner a whole house had been completely demolished, and the rescue men were hard at work among the smouldering debris, frantically searching in the vain hope that some of the six persons buried underneath might still be alive.

Another night a shower of incendiaries of a kind that, for some reason or another, were called "Molotov bread-baskets" fell in the street outside our block of flats. Some of us ran out to see what we could do, and the incongruous beauty of the scene left one momentarily spellbound: the intense brilliance of the bombs flood-lighting the surrounding buildings, trees and shrubs, gave them against the dark background of the night an eerie beauty. But of course we knew it was essential to get these missiles extinguished as soon as possible, in case they might be followed, as was the usual practice, by high explosives. The incendiary bombs which the enemy were then using, if tackled promptly with sand and stirrup-pump, were not difficult to deal with; but later on an explosive charge was inserted as well, which made matters somewhat more complicated.

In Kensington alone, during the battle of London, over 10,000 houses were damaged by air-raids and 800 completely wrecked. Throughout the country as a whole the figures of damage were one in five, so far as dwelling-houses were concerned. This gives some idea of what the total damage must have been, quite apart from the destruction of business premises, historic buildings, hospitals, churches, etc., of which no doubt statistics will one day be published.

No one who was in London when it happened is likely to forget the first night when we really began to hit back. This was Wednesday, September 11th, 1940. During the previous four nights we had steeled ourselves to bear with such fortitude as we could the incessant crash of bombs, the fires, the widespread devastation; and there seemed to be no answer except possibly by way of future reprisals and retaliation against the cities and towns of the enemy, when we should be strong enough to undertake them.

But on that historic Wednesday we realized that we were wrong; we were not so defenceless as we had feared. The enemy learned a lesson too. On that night, at first there was the customary intermittent drone of the bombers overhead, the thud of the bombs and the sickening rumble of falling masonry. Then suddenly there was a new sound—or rather many new sounds—noises which bewildered us at first, and then, as we realized what they meant, exhilarated us. We were hitting back; it was our own guns that were speaking, big naval guns mounted on lorries, which moved from point to point as they roared and thundered; A.A. guns which spit and swore; pom-poms which rattled and rasped—the biggest anti-aircraft barrage anyone had ever imagined. It had a heartening effect on the people of London, and apparently an unnerving one on the enemy; at all events no big fires were started that night in London; only forty people were killed and a little over a hundred injured. Next morning, in spite of their grim experiences, Londoners greeted one another with a fresh glint in their eyes.

"Well, we gave Jerry something to think about last night. I didn't get a wink of sleep, but, my word, it was worth it!"

But although the barrage was comforting, the nightly raids continued, and it was clear that no real defence had yet been discovered, although everyone tried to believe it soon would be. Even in the minds of some of those officials high up in the Air Ministry, who broadcast encouraging talks, there was a good deal of wishful thinking. Doubtless they knew that much successful

research and experiment was going on, and were banking on the time when these new devices could be brought into use.

Then a little later, in addition to the barrage, the night fighters went into action, and as they engaged the enemy above the red-illuminated masses of clouds, it became a constant source of discussion and argument as to whether the drone overhead was *ours* or *theirs*. Some people professed to be infallible in distinguishing between them, but as to this I was more than a little sceptical. However, the fighters soon proved their worth, and the night when they shot down three bombers made us begin to feel we were on the way towards mastering this terrible menace; and when, on a subsequent night some weeks later, the score rose to thirty-three, it did not seem impossible to hope for an ultimate supremacy at night as complete as we had already won through the daylight hours.

Among the most troublesome things with which we had to deal during the Blitz were the delayed action or time bombs, and often it was not easy to discover even where they had fallen. They came down without any explosion, making only a dull thud, and sometimes burying themselves ten to fifteen feet in the earth. There they lay until—in a few minutes, a few hours, or a few days—they exploded, causing havoc and destruction to all around, and everyone living in the vicinity had to be evacuated for the time being.

Very soon, however, a body of experts belonging to the Royal Engineers was formed into what came to be known as the "Bomb Disposal Squad". It was the duty of these men to remove as quickly as possible the unexploded bombs, or by disconnecting the mechanism render them harmless, and the work of this squad constitutes a story of heroism and cool courage beyond praise.

One of the largest of these bombs fell close to St. Paul's Cathedral, endangering for some days not only this great building but the whole area.

It became a familiar sight in London to see lorries painted with distinguishing marks in yellow and red and bearing large red letters B.D.S. in front and behind, as a warning to pedestrians and traffic to stay clear. Often these lorries were literally racing with death, for the bomb they carried to the disposal fields might easily explode before they got there. All over London one came across streets that were roped off and bore the notice "Unexploded Bomb".

One of these missiles fell on a piece of ground just behind our own flat. As a result, for four days we were compelled to picnic in the front rooms as best we could, because at any moment the bomb might have gone off and demolished the back part of the flat.

The usual procedure was that, as soon as possible after an unexploded bomb had been reported, one of the vividly painted lorries would arrive, manned by three or four men, who would go to the spot, sum up the situation, judge just where and how deep the bomb might be and then get to work with picks, crowbars and spades. Their movements were unhurried and systematic; they seemed merely to have an urgent job of work to do. There was no trace of fear in any of them. As soon as they had reached the bomb and uncovered it, hoisting tackle would be produced, and it would be carefully raised and deposited in the lorry; the officer and sergeant would then climb on, the driver let in his clutch and the car with its load of death would be driven off at top speed to the nearest marsh, quarry or open field.

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The removal of the St. Paul's Cathedral bomb was one of the most remarkable adventures of the gallant Bomb Disposal Squad. It was a large bomb, some 800 lbs. in weight and five and a half feet long, which had buried itself about twenty-six feet into the ground, close to the outer walls of the cathedral. If it had gone off the whole building would probably have been destroyed. To reach the bomb the disposal squad had to dig a slanting hole, and cut through gas mains and electric cables as they went. Half-way down three of the men were gassed. Then a passage had to be dug deep beneath the cathedral steps, along which the bomb was coaxed inch by inch. As electric drills and other machinery could not be used, the men for much of the time had to dig with their hands. Then, when the bomb was brought near enough to the surface, cables were attached and it was slowly dragged out.

Lieutenant Davies, R.E., who was in command and afterwards received the George Cross for the exploit, is said to have actually sat on the bomb while it was being hoisted upwards and gently lowered into a lorry. As soon as this had been done the police cleared the way and Davies himself drove the lorry at sixty miles an hour from St. Paul's to Hackney Marshes, where it was exploded, making a 100-foot crater and breaking windows half a mile away.

This story has often been told, but to Londoners it will always remain one of the epic stories of the war: a deed of cold-blooded courage without compare, as each of the men engaged in it knew well that at any moment he and his companions might be blown to pieces.

Another story which is worth recalling had a sequel before one of my colleagues. Not without its amusing side, it might easily have ended in tragedy, and illustrates the difficulty the Bomb Disposal Squad often had, when dealing with live bombs, in keeping the public away from them.

In this instance a delayed-action bomb crashed into a building in Jermyn Street. A Mr. Frederick Leighton-Morris, who lived there and must have been a highly enterprising individual, crawled through a hole in the roof and located the bomb, which he found by a miraculous chance had dropped on to a bed in the room below, where it was standing up, as he put it, "like a great beer-bottle". Leighton-Morris thereupon took it up in his arms and carried it downstairs. On reaching the street, he began to walk with the bomb towards St. James's Park. Very soon an inquisitive policeman came up and inquired what on earth he was doing. When he explained he was taking the bomb for safety to the nearest open space, he was informed by the officer of the law that it was an offence for a civilian to tamper with unexploded bombs and that he would be arrested.

"All right," said Leighton-Morris, "I'll go quietly."

What exactly happened to the bomb is not quite clear, but next day Mr. Morris duly appeared before my Bow Street colleague, who quite rightly took the view that civilians must be discouraged from playing with bombs, and a fine of £50 was therefore imposed. But meanwhile the story had fired the public imagination, and it was not long before questions were asked in the House of Commons, and as a result the Home Secretary announced that the Government had considered the case, and after consultation with the magistrate had decided to reduce the fine to £5.

"Thanks very much," said the irrepressible Mr. Leighton-Morris; "that's O.K. I'll pay the five pounds with pleasure; it was worth it." The law was

thus vindicated, a public warning had been given to others who might give way to similar temptations to play about with live bombs, and incidentally a fine example had been provided of civilian courage and initiative.

On the whole I think most of us came to the conclusion that the worst thing about the continuous nightly raids was their interference with our normal night's sleep. The truth is, of course, that, all through our lives, we take sleep more or less for granted—we never give it a second thought; and then suddenly, if we miss it for some reason, it becomes a first-class worry, and we are immediately anxious as to how it will affect our health.

I doubt whether most people can keep awake and overcome the desire for sleep for more than a couple of nights or so. After that, sleep is induced by sheer physical exhaustion, regardless of surrounding conditions or any personal worries, and this was proved during the Blitz. Indeed, to many foreign observers, the most striking phenomenon of shelter life in London throughout that period was the way people seemed able to sleep under the most adverse and unbelievable circumstances.

When the Second World War broke out I was, of course, free from the perplexities and anxieties as to where my personal duty lay which had afflicted me so much on the previous occasion.

This time I was well over military age and a Metropolitan magistrate, whose obvious task was to carry on at all costs with the job of assisting to maintain law and order, and of dealing with the day-to-day problems of the people which the state of emergency had done so much to accentuate.

All the same, my official duties still left me with a certain amount of leisure, and I soon found myself involved in many extraneous activities. At the invitation of the Ministry of Information I began once again to do a good deal of platform speaking throughout the country at some of the thousands of meetings arranged under the auspices of the Ministry. This brought back old times, and was the kind of work of which I had done so much during my Parliamentary life. The demand for such meetings was very great, as public interest in the fundamental issues of the war became more intense.

I therefore travelled many thousands of miles, and gave war commentaries in places as far apart as Bournemouth and Blackburn, Nottingham and Newcastle, Reigate and Rotherham.

Of all war-time Government Departments, the Ministry of Information was perhaps the most vulnerable to public criticism, and right from the beginning there was a constant guerilla campaign against it.

This luckless organization, which ultimately worked extremely well, had been carefully devised and planned by Sir Samuel Hoare months before the outbreak of hostilities. And although many lessons had been learned in the First World War, it had to meet from the beginning an incessant barrage of criticism—both from Parliament and the Press. Yet most people realized that our cherished liberties of freedom of speech and freedom of the Press must be ruthlessly curtailed in time of war. Nevertheless the M.O.I. provided an excellent target for all the irritation and resentment which such restrictions inevitably entailed.

Undoubtedly the personnel of the Ministry was open to serious objections in its early days. Very few of the staff had any practical experience of journalism or the presentation of news. The first Minister of Information was Lord Macmillan, a distinguished lawyer, but perhaps on that very account not an ideal choice. The legal mind generally tends towards caution and reticence rather than to the frank disclosure of all available information. The training of the lawyer is opposed to sensationalism, and favours a precise judgment of ascertained facts, and is therefore not best suited for conducting war-time propaganda.

Lord Macmillan was followed by Sir John Reith, who had done brilliant work at the B.B.C., but whose temperament was too autocratic to make an ideal Press chief. Nor was his successor, Duff Cooper, much better fitted to fill this peculiar position, and public opinion was seriously disturbed when it was finally disclosed that, out of the thousand or more persons employed by the Ministry, only forty-three were practical journalists and that the vast majority of the remainder were drawn from a score of Government Departments, apparently more or less at random. Most of these defects were ultimately remedied, but the M.O.I. nevertheless remained an "Aunt Sally" for public criticism throughout the country. The most successful chief the Ministry has had is Brendan Bracken, who not only possesses practical experience as a journalist, but is perhaps somewhat more "hard-boiled" than any of his predecessors, and on that account better fitted to cope with the kind of problems the Ministry inevitably has to face in time of war.

My other war-time activity was National Savings. When I was first "roped" into it by the gifted and persuasive Mayor of Kensington, Councillor R. C. D. Jenkins, and invited to assist in the organization of the movement in the Royal Borough, I confess to not having been greatly interested. It did not seem quite my line of country—too much a matter of figures and accounts and the preaching of humdrum virtues such as thrift and economy. I soon realized how wrong I was and that here was a movement which could be made to penetrate every home in the country and appeal to young and old alike, a movement, moreover, which was not only of vital importance in winning the war but might prove later on to be the economic salvation of our people in the terribly difficult days of reconstruction after victory had been achieved. I was glad therefore to do what I could to further the success of this remarkable campaign, which under the forceful and devoted leadership of Lord Kindersley had already achieved the extraordinary feat of raising by voluntary savings many thousands of millions of pounds and easing to that extent the almost intolerable burdens borne by the general taxpayers of the country, as well as providing in hundreds of thousands of working-class homes a "nest-egg" for the future.

In these various ways I had the satisfaction of playing just a small part in the war effort. Insignificant indeed compared with that of millions of others, but nevertheless something. Naturally I often wished, like most other men of my age, that I could take a more prominent and active part in this tremendous conflict. But it was not to be, and perhaps even little things have their value, as my old Oxford friend, R. Gorell Barnes of Balliol (now Lord Gorell), has expressed so well in some lines he wrote for the *Sunday Times*:

We are not wanted; all the world is rent
With bitter fiercenesses, tempestuous rage,
And battles to the swift; the tide is spent
Upon Youth's broken, bloody heritage.
We luckless elders who were once so strong
We never had a thought that Time would bow
Our shoulders to his throne are swept along
Like logs adrift; we are not wanted now.
We have no place upon this earth at arms,
This grim, taut madness bursting into spray,
This whirl of struggling and of war's alarms
That bear the waters of the bold away.
And yet we labour: little things are done
By our hands daily, and the little things
It is that make the mountain, one by one,
Piled up behind the famous happenings.
We shall not wave the banner, wear the crown
Of great achievement and of righted wrong;
But ago and ailments shall not tread us down,
And we will share the victors' triumph-song.

From one point of view it is a cruel stroke of fate that those of my generation should have had to face two world wars in our lifetime, that we should twice have had all our hopes and plans destroyed and our lives disrupted and that for the greater part of them we should never have known the peace, security and stability our fathers enjoyed. But, on the other hand, we have had experiences and adventures they never had. We have been privileged to live through one of the greatest periods in the history of mankind and have been eye-witnesses of mighty events which will be remembered so long as the world stands.

CHAPTER IX

I BECOME A METROPOLITAN MAGISTRATE

I COMMENCED my career as a Metropolitan magistrate at West London, where I have remained ever since, being thus invested with powers of summary jurisdiction over Kensington, Fulham, Hammersmith, and a somewhat disorderly population which inhabits the districts round Notting Dale, Ladbroke Grove and Portobello Road.

The position of a stipendiary magistrate in London, and indeed in any large city, is one of considerable responsibility. He is entrusted with very wide powers, which he has to execute unaided. He is the only judicial authority in the country, apart from an alderman of the City of London, who can hear and decide a criminal charge single-handed and impose a sentence of imprisonment without the assistance of a jury.

Some day the misleading name of "Police Court", as applied to Courts of Summary Jurisdiction, will, I trust, disappear. Nothing is more mischievous, for to many people it conveys the erroneous idea that in these Courts the police have some special status or influence they do not possess elsewhere. That of course is quite untrue. Yet one constantly meets defendants who imagine they are at a disadvantage when, as often happens, the evidence against them depends on the statements of one or more police officers. It is a common

idea that the magistrate feels more or less bound to support the police no matter what they say, and that in weighing the evidence he always tends to accept the word of a police officer in preference to that of an ordinary civilian. The fact is, however, that the police are present in a purely executive capacity, and have no more to do with the actual administration of justice in a Summary Court than in any other criminal tribunal in the country.

At the same time I have a sincere admiration for the police and the manner in which they do their work. Taken as a whole, they are a fine humane body of men, actuated by a real sense of responsibility and a strict code of honour. Time and again I have known them go out of their way to bring facts before the Court which they thought might be helpful to the accused, and many cases have come to my notice in which the police, out of their own slender resources, have helped poor people in distress. Of course the police are human, and there may be and doubtless are a few black sheep among them, as in almost every other section of the community. There may also be occasions when they have in charge some prisoner whom they consider to be guilty, perhaps rightly so, but against whom the evidence is weak. When this happens the temptation to strengthen it, possibly by an alleged admission based on some chance phrase of the accused, may be difficult to resist, and a magistrate always needs to examine such evidence—and especially such “confessions”—with a good deal of care, but for any member of the police force to try to convict an innocent man by evidence that is wholly untrue is, I am glad to say, in my experience practically unknown. It must be remembered that a fierce light of publicity beats on the police force, and if any policeman oversteps the bounds of propriety the Press naturally makes the most of it. But the fact that there are so few such cases affords a convincing proof of the high standard maintained. Another thing that has often impressed me is how little real animosity exists between the so-called criminal classes and the police. Unless the former think they have been the victims of sharp practice there is generally no malice.

So long as he is given a reasonable chance to defend himself, the average hardened criminal regards his conviction rather as a business man does a bad debt: it is one of the risks of his trade, and he views the sentence accordingly. Sometimes he shows himself a shrewd judge of the adequacy or otherwise of the punishment inflicted, for one of my colleagues, who had a reputation for impartial but stern justice, tells a story of an occasion when he decided, for certain special reasons, to give an old lag one more chance and imposed a sentence which was a good deal milder than was his usual practice. The prisoner was obviously surprised, and on leaving the dock remarked *sotto voce* to the gaoler: “Wot’s the matter with your guv’nor this morning? Has he had a couple or is he getting a bit soft?”

A very great deal of public interest is taken in the work of the Metropolitan Police Courts, and many of the more popular dailies and evening papers devote a column or so every day to reports of Police Court proceedings, written in a humorous or sentimental vein and dealing with the dramatic or pathetic features of the cases brought before the Courts.

As a result of this publicity a new magistrate is himself on trial when he takes his seat for the first time, and perhaps therefore I may be forgiven for quoting a short report that appeared in the *Evening News* and was written by a well-known journalist, James Dunn, who specialized in this class of work under the pseudonym of “R. E. Corder”.

Sir Gervais Rentoul, K.C., the new Metropolitan magistrate, sat in the chair of the late Mr. J. A. R. Cairns, for the first time, on Saturday.

A magistrate's first day in Court is something like that of a schoolmaster's first day in the class-room—he is summing up and being summed up.

No matter how extensive an experience a new magistrate may have had as a lawyer in other Courts, his first day on the Bench in a Metropolitan Police Court is a trying ordeal. He is closely if respectfully watched by police and public, prisoners and Court officials, and every little mannerism is noted and remembered.

Sir Gervais Rentoul made an excellent first impression. A man of fine physique and a dignified but not austere bearing, he looks like a magistrate and his presence on the Bench inspires confidence.

His gray-blue Irish eyes reveal in their twinkle a sense of humour, that most desirable gift in a Metropolitan magistrate. He has a firm mellow voice which can be very kind and also very stern, but there is more sympathy than severity in his manner.

With his healthy complexion and alert eyes Sir Gervais looks like an out-of-doors man. His broad high forehead suggests a broad mind and well-balanced judgment.

Applicants for advice provide a test and sometimes a terror for the new magistrate. Sir Gervais had a typical case—a wife who did not know her own mind.

She said she did not want her husband and would not have him in the house at any price; and then she complained that when she told him to go he stopped out all night.

The magistrate soothed her with soft words, and said he could not advise her until he had heard the husband, but meanwhile the Court Missionary would make enquiries. A nice combination of duty and diplomacy.

Sir Gervais promises to be a swift worker. He is not prone to lecture, and he does not waste words. His questions are short, sharp and incisive, and his decisions are quick and certain.

"He's all right" was the popular decision of solicitors, officials and public at the rising of the Court. Sir Gervais Rentoul had passed the test.

West London has always been regarded as one of the busiest of the fourteen Metropolitan Courts, in spite of the fact that it has no distinctive features of population or types of crime. The East End Courts, for instance, have an obvious atmosphere of their own, emanating from the districts that surround them and the class of inhabitants. A magistrate who sits there often has to cultivate a special method of approach and sometimes, as it were, learn to express himself in a different idiom. At Marlborough Street, to take another example, the work has definite features of its own, owing to the *locus in quo*. There the daily charge sheets contain stories of brawls and unpleasant incidents in Hyde Park, of prostitutes charged with soliciting, of queer happenings in the foreign quarters of Soho and other cases of a kind one does not generally come across elsewhere. And so it is that most of the Courts have their peculiar attributes. At West London, however, the population is more socially mixed and we do not run in any particular groove. All sorts and conditions of people charged with every variety of offence appear before the Court, which adds appreciably to the interest of the work.

The police-courts have by Statute to be kept open every day in the year except Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday. The reason is, of course, that no person accused of any criminal offence must be detained in custody without being brought before a magistrate in open Court for more than twenty-four hours. The police themselves have limited powers to grant bail, but only until the next sitting of the Court.

There are, however, two magistrates attached to each Court, so that it is seldom necessary to sit more than four days a week, and one is therefore able to avoid the danger—which would otherwise be a real one—of becoming jaded or stale. The actual number of days each week a magistrate is required to sit depends to some extent on the health of his colleagues, because whatever

happens there must always be a magistrate available for each Court, and in case of illness one is liable to be called upon at any time to step into the breach.

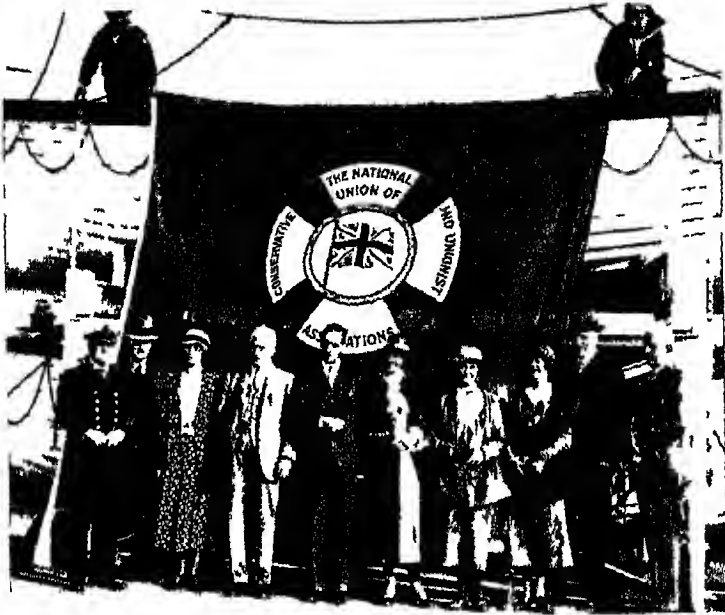
For most of the period since I was appointed to West London I have had the good fortune to have as my fellow magistrate Paul Bennett, V.C., and certainly no one could wish for a more agreeable or sagacious colleague.

Comparatively few people realize how enormously important is the part now played by the Magistrates' Courts, as I prefer to call them, in the administration of criminal justice and the enforcement of law and public order. It is a startling fact that, according to the most recent statistics, over ninety-eight per cent of the entire crime of the country is now tried and dealt with from start to finish by the magistrates, and less than two per cent are sent to the Assizes and Quarter Sessions. This is an alarming responsibility, because it means that the magistrates—the vast majority of whom possess no legal training or experience—have in their hands daily the liberties and fortunes of thousands of their fellow citizens.

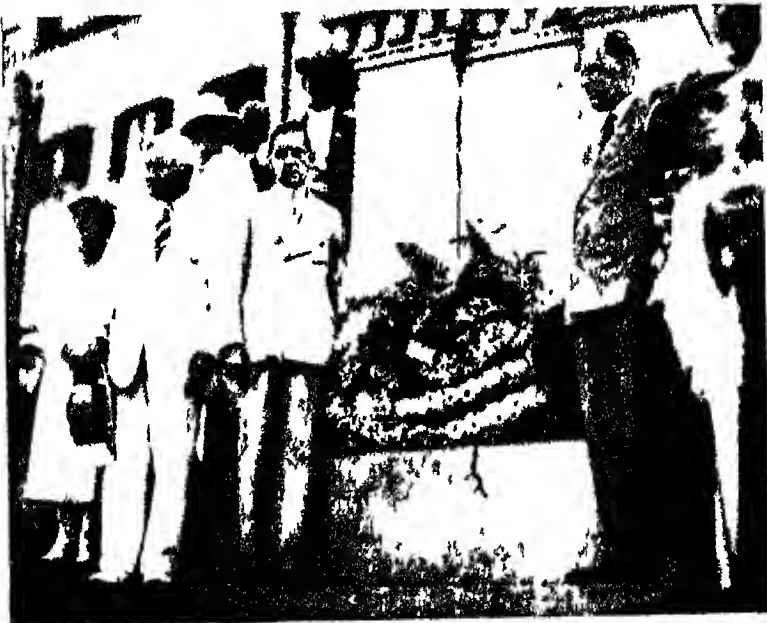
Settling the guilt or innocence of an accused person is a comparatively simple matter, but it is a very different thing to know what to do with him afterwards, so many factors have to be taken into account. Within certain limitations a magistrate's discretion is unfettered: he may impose a sentence of as much as twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour or inflict, as an alternative or in addition thereto, fines running into many thousands of pounds. He can disqualify a motorist from driving a car for the rest of his life, and he has extensive powers in many other directions which need to be exercised with mercy, understanding and discretion. He is bound to give the most anxious thought to the question of punishment, because it is not only the penalty laid upon the individual offender or even his reformation that alone require to be considered. There is also the public interest to be served. One has to determine not only how far a sentence is likely to be a deterrent to others from committing the same offence, but whether it will satisfy the public conscience that justice has been done. Then again there is the personal factor. To one individual a sentence of imprisonment—be it long or short—may not only cause social ruin but inflict the utmost personal suffering and humiliation, whilst to another it may be, both spiritually and materially, little more than a passing incident. Generally speaking, however, leniency—ever-increasing leniency—is the keynote of our criminal administration today. This does not arise from mere sentimentality or super-humanitarianism but out of severely practical considerations. Criminal statistics supply ample proof—as the experience of every magistrate confirms—that the excessive harshness of the past tended to increase rather than diminish crime. In Shakespeare's time, for instance, the quality of mercy was little appreciated or practised, although no one taught more persuasively than he did that "pity is the virtue of the law".

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods,
Draw near them then in being merciful,
Such mercy is encompassed with true pity.

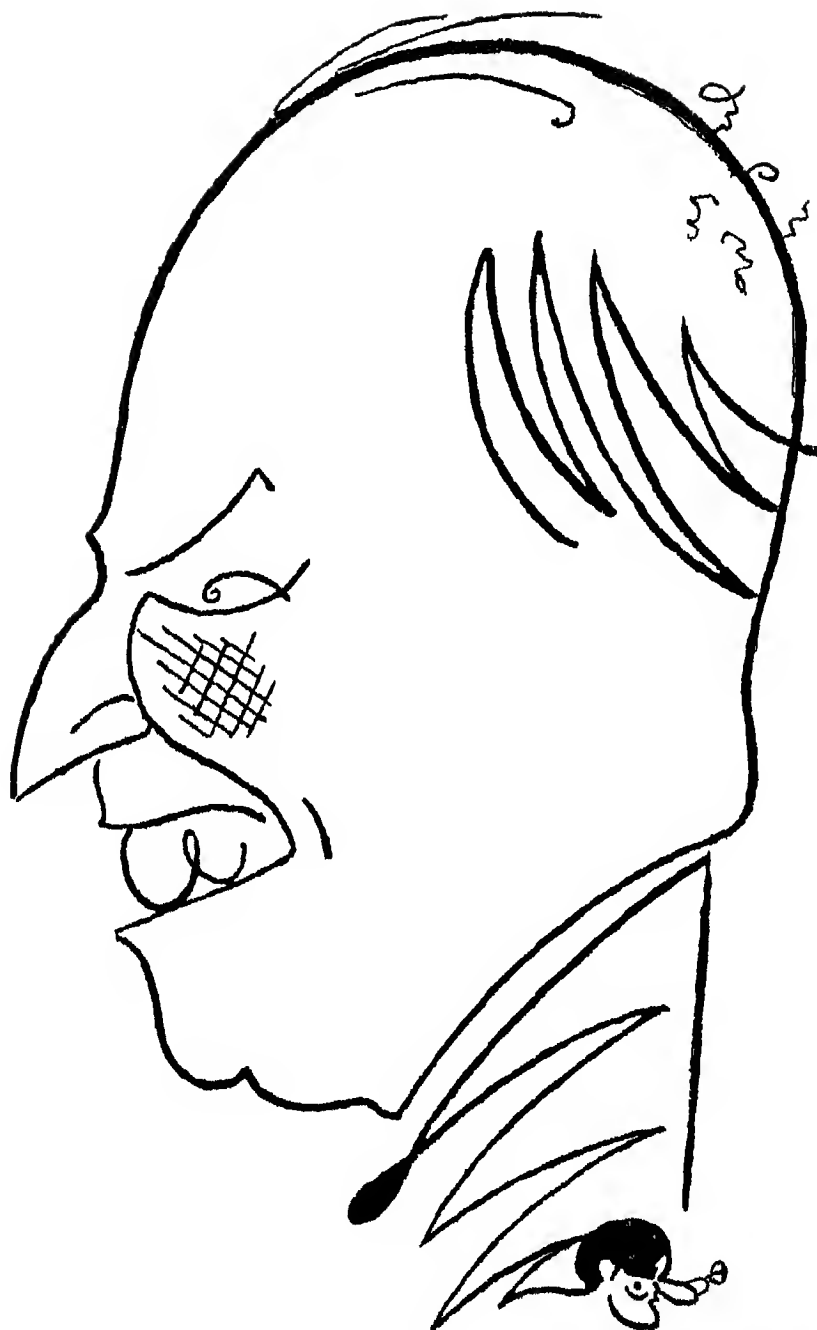
Of course a magistrate must always be on his guard lest detestation of the offence may tempt him into vindictive anger against the criminal whose case must be considered on its individual merits. In cases of abominable cruelty, such, for instance, as is sometimes committed against children, it is difficult not to feel that the old Mosaic law of retribution has much to recom-



ON BOARD THE S.S. "DORIC"



AT THE WAR MEMORIAL, GIBRALTAR



[Visto por Teixeira Cahal]

A CARICATURE OF THE AUTHOR FROM DIARIO DE NOTICIAS, LISBON

mend it. Yet every judge or magistrate must remember, when passing sentence on any criminal, however debased, that his very depravity constitutes a claim to our sorrowful pity. Retributive punishment may sometimes be necessary for the protection of society and as a warning to others, but who will dispute that, so far as the offender himself is concerned, reformation is more likely to be found—not in severity, but in what is at once the noblest and greatest of all virtues—mercy.

On the subject of crime and punishment generally a good deal of nonsense is talked at times. We all know that punishment by itself cannot eradicate crime. It can, however, do much to keep it within reasonable limits. Yet some people would have us believe that all crime is a disease and that convicted persons should not be dealt with by the magistrate at all, but handed over to the doctor or psychologist. This theory of moral irresponsibility is one which I am quite unable to accept. Indeed, I believe there is a vast amount of wisdom in Baron Bramwell's pithy remark: that the real test is whether the accused would have acted as he did if he had seen a policeman coming.

Psychology has been well defined as consisting of four ingredients: sound scientific observation and deduction, common sense, personal opinions disguised in technical language, and mumbo-jumbo, the whole liberally seasoned with a sprinkling of pure platitude.

Occasionally one comes across a case in which the services of a psycho-therapist may be helpful, but for the most part crime, in my experience, is remarkable for its sanity. I am not referring to sexual offences, which stand in a class by themselves, but I am satisfied the vast majority of criminals know perfectly well what they are doing and have a shrewd appreciation of the material advantages they hope to derive from their criminal conduct. This conduct may be anti-social and deplorable, but it is perfectly rational. I believe this even applies to what is perhaps the most baffling and unfortunately the most frequent of all offences so far as the Metropolitan Courts are concerned, namely shoplifting. Now here is an offence which has certain features that are unique. To begin with, it is almost exclusively committed by women. So rarely does a male shoplifter appear before the Courts as really not to enter into the picture at all. These women for the most part are middle-aged and bear a hitherto exemplary character. Very often they are respectable mothers of families, and have been regarded up to the time of their appearance in the dock as highly reputable members of society. Then suddenly one day they leave their homes and embark upon a most deliberate thieving expedition, often going from one department to another of a large store or maybe to several shops in succession and stealing something from each. More often than not the articles stolen are trumpery in the extreme, and in many cases the woman has ample money in her purse to pay for them.

Recently I had one such woman before me who had stolen a number of articles from nine different departments of a large store, the total value being less than ten shillings, and yet she had on her at the time one hundred and twenty pounds of her own money. It might be suggested that here at any rate was a case for the psychologist, but on the other hand it was fairly obvious that the things she stole had caught her fancy, and of course it was much easier (and cheaper) to pick them up when no one was looking than to pay for them. Indeed the temptation to obtain something for nothing, though fortunately not by such methods, is fairly universal. Now and then I have found the services of a psychologist to be of value, as well as other methods of treatment which, until comparatively recent times, were unheard of. There is not much

doubt that the shortage of many commodities during the war has enormously increased the temptation to steal, especially as it is no longer merely a question of having the money but of possessing the necessary coupons as well. The paper shortage also has made detection more difficult. Goods are no longer wrapped up. In normal times this was one of the most valuable safeguards against the activities of the shoplifter, for anyone seen carrying an unwrapped article was immediately under suspicion. Many of the London shops now find it necessary to pool the private detective staffs, which they are compelled to maintain at considerable expense, and to give them a roving commission in one another's premises. But even so the fact remains that there has been a one hundred per cent increase in these cases since the war, and it is one of the most troublesome problems with which a magistrate has to deal.

No magistrate of experience would be so foolish as to deny that environment and upbringing and even certain hereditary traits do sometimes play an important part in a criminal's make-up, and may account to some extent for his appearance in the dock, but surely it does not require a doctor or psychiatrist to tell us this. One's own common sense and knowledge of human nature are a sufficient guide.

I think it is important that a magistrate should always state briefly in open Court the reasons for his decisions. It is true that a cynic once declared this to be most unwise. Although a magistrate's decisions might be right, he said, his reasons were almost sure to be wrong. Nevertheless it is a risk that should be run. For one thing, there is the old dictum that not only must justice be done, but what is even more essential is that justice should be *seen* to be done. And again, if no reasons are given, both the prosecution and defence may be entirely mystified as to why the case has gone the way it has, and they leave the Court with a real feeling of injustice or irritation. Indeed, in matrimonial cases, the Court of Appeal has expressly laid down that magistrates ought always to give reasons for their decisions. But if this is desirable in one class of case why not in another?

I have found in practice that one of the most satisfactory methods for dealing not only with juveniles but offenders generally and even with those who have been previously convicted, whenever one feels justified in giving them another chance, is the "long remand". That is to say, instead of sending the accused person to prison I remand him on bail for three or six months to see how he behaves meanwhile. I warn him that during the period in question he is to keep in touch with the probation officer and that it will depend very largely on the report which the latter is able to give me whether I make an end of the matter when the delinquent comes before me again or send him to prison. The advantage of this is that the offender knows full well that at the end of the fixed period he will have to come before the Court again and answer for his conduct, and that it is up to him whether he takes advantage or not of the chance now being offered.

But reverting to the question of punishment, many other problems arise. Take just one of them: the question of imposing a fine as an alternative to imprisonment. Might it not be argued that this is altogether wrong? If imprisonment is the proper punishment for the offence can it be right to give it, as it were, a monetary value? Is this just or does it not mean in practice that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor? It must be remembered that more than three-quarters of the offences dealt with by the

Summary Courts are punishable by fines. Indeed, in many cases a fine is the only penalty that can be imposed in the first instance. But in others the law gives an alternative between a fine and a sentence of imprisonment. This means that in such cases the magistrate, in his discretion, is empowered to offer the offender the chance of paying a sum of money rather than go to prison. On the other hand, if he does not pay and is unable to purchase his freedom in this way, imprisonment is the only alternative. But if he does go to prison he is still permitted to escape part of his sentence if he pays part of the money, each day having a definite monetary value.

Surely such a position is entirely anomalous. Should not the law be asked to make up its mind what the punishment is to be? If it is imprisonment, then the offender should go to prison and stay there until he has completed his sentence: if a fine, then it should be imposed without any mention of imprisonment. Naturally, if the offender did not pay he would have to be summoned before the Court to show cause why he should not be imprisoned for his neglect. If the default is due to circumstances beyond his control then he might be given further time to pay, but if he appears to have been guilty of wilful refusal or intentional neglect he would be imprisoned for such length of time as the Court thought fit. Of course in some cases both the fine and the imprisonment are definitely intended as a punishment for a criminal offence, but in others quite different considerations prevail; the same element of criminality is not present. And it is here, I regret to say, that, contrary to what most people imagine, imprisonment for debt still exists. It is true that by the Debtors' Act of 1869 it was solemnly laid down that no person should henceforth be arrested or imprisoned for making default in payment of a sum of money unless it is proved to the satisfaction of the Court that he has the means to pay and is wilfully refusing or neglecting to do so. Yet in 1910, forty years later, there were 90,000 such imprisonments for what were at worst merely quasi-criminal offences. In 1933 there were still over 25,000 and even today about 15,000 persons are undergoing imprisonment annually for non-payment of debts.

In 1932 there was a Departmental Enquiry to review the existing law and report what changes might be made to reduce the number of these cases, with due regard, of course, to the necessity of securing compliance with orders made by the Courts. The committee reported in 1934, and as a result there was some improvement, particularly under the provisions of the Money Payments (Justices Procedure) Act, 1935, whereby the principal recommendations of the committee were carried into effect. The main difficulty, however, still remains, namely how to obtain reliable information as to the financial position of the debtor. Many magistrates are definitely uneasy as to the kind of evidence of "means" on which they are often asked to send people to prison. This is particularly the case in regard to imprisonment for arrears of wife maintenance orders and affiliation orders and for non-payment of rates, all of which are exclusively dealt with by the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction. The difficulty is increased by the undoubted fact that a number of men deliberately take advantage of the alternative the law offers them, and choose to go to prison instead of making the cash payment which the law has ordered. Indeed, I have known many instances in which a defaulting husband has been only too glad to liquidate his financial liabilities towards his wife and family by spending a few days in prison. It is in this respect that the law seems to require amendment.

It must be remembered, however, that the punitive part of a magistrate's duties is of considerably less importance than his function as "guide, philosopher and friend" to the poorer classes of the community, most of whom, I am glad to

say, seem to recognize that he is there primarily for a helpful purpose. They regard his criminal jurisdiction as a necessary nuisance and have the feeling that if punishment must be inflicted it might as well be by someone who understands them and their lives, just as the panel doctor has sometimes to prescribe unpalatable medicine. This no doubt explains why a prisoner, rather than exercise his right of trial by jury, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred prefers to trust himself to the sole discretion of a magistrate he knows rather than to twelve of his fellow countrymen whom he does not know.

It is unfortunate that the disciplinary side of police-court work should largely monopolize public attention, and the fact so often forgotten that the Metropolitan Courts are also great philanthropic institutions for the help of the poor, with considerable funds at their disposal subscribed by charitably minded individuals and associations.

And now let me try to give some idea of a police-court day from a magistrate's point of view.

As a rule it begins some time before he takes his seat on the Bench. As soon as he arrives at the Court, he probably finds that the chief clerk, upon whom the smooth working of the Court depends, is anxious to discuss some administrative detail or point of law likely to arise in the day's work.

A magistrate's responsibilities would certainly be much more onerous than they are if he could not rely on the invaluable assistance of his chief clerk. At West London Mr. J. H. Craine is a tower of strength: capable, industrious, tactful and efficient; a sound lawyer with a thorough mastery of his work. Taken as a whole, the chief clerks of the Metropolitan Courts are a remarkable body of men, who uphold the best traditions of the civil service.

After that there are sure to be two or three probation officers waiting to report on some of the cases where a remand for inquiries has been ordered.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the part played in the administration of justice by the probation officer, or "court missionary" as he is sometimes called, although this latter name has largely fallen into disuse. Without his (or her) assistance it would often be impossible to do justice. The magistrate would be left groping in the dark, entirely ignorant of many factors which it is essential he should know if the punishment is to be made to fit the crime. The good probation officer is born and not made. Of course he has to have considerable technical training; but certainly no one should take up this work unless inspired by true missionary zeal and an inborn love of his fellow-man. He must not only be a good Christian in the broadest sense of the word, but also a man of the world, able to understand the follies and weaknesses of mankind. He must have a sympathetic nature which invites confidence, and yet be able to show clearly that he will not stand any nonsense or swallow without question any tale he may be told. He must possess infinite patience and never acknowledge defeat, or regard any case as hopeless; he must be shrewd, tactful and warm-hearted, and fully appreciative of the immense importance of his job without seeking to obtain from it any personal advantage or kudos. I remember a probation officer with over thirty years' experience remarking to me once that he would rather be a probation officer than anything else in the world. It is only if he approaches his task in this spirit that he will be likely to attain any real measure of success.

So far as the actual Court work is concerned, a magistrate's first task is to hear applications from the public for summonses or warrants of arrest or other process of the Court, or, what is even more important, for general advice on

any matters of personal or domestic interest. These are dealt with by the magistrate personally before the public are admitted, and constitute an invaluable social service in addition to his strictly judicial functions. Anyone who cares to do so can seek such friendly assistance, but of course if, as sometimes happens, it is merely for the purpose of obtaining free legal advice which applicants are well able to pay for elsewhere, they do not receive much encouragement, but are told to go away and consult a solicitor.

Many of these applications are not devoid of pathos or humour: the majority of the applicants are women, and the trouble is often due to the fact that they have not learnt the great art of being neighbourly. No doubt when two or more women and their families share the same house and have to use in common certain domestic amenities, such as the scullery or outhouse or bathroom or garden, or are jointly responsible for keeping clean the entrance passage and staircase, the causes of friction are apt to be numerous.

But sometimes other difficulties arise. I remember one case in which two women arrived at the Court in a high state of indignation, each charging the other with assault. After a certain amount of delicate probing I was able to get to the bottom of the matter and discover the reason for what turned out to be a literal lack of harmony. The trouble in this case was all about a piano which belonged to one of the complainants whom I will call "Mary". Having left the door of her room unlocked, the other woman—"Matilda"—had entered her flat and played on the piano without permission. Not unnaturally, Mary was furiously aggrieved. When she began to tell me about the desecration of her beloved instrument I glimpsed it as a proud and upright form—a piano carved and aged in dignity. It was apparently a favourite piece of furniture, and she spoke of it with awe.

"We live, that woman and me," said Mary, rudely pointing at her adversary, "in the same house. I have lived there eight years and she has lived there but two, and all the time there has been trouble. It started with arguments about her cat and went on with arguments about my dog. To crown it all, I comes home the other day to find what—her and her friend sitting in my flat, smoking cigarettes and thumping away on my piano."

Up then jumped Matilda, very angry and highly injured.

"Why, you haven't got a piano!" she shouted across the Court.

"I haven't now," said Mary, "but I can prove that I had one. If you, sir, will come round to my place you will still see the top of the piano in my room."

"The top!" I exclaimed.

"Well, I was so furious at her playing it that I took the piano to bits."

"What," I said incredulously, "take a piano to bits because someone else played on it!"

Mary gave details of the dismemberment.

"Yes, I did. I took out the notes and gave some to Mrs. A. next door and some to the woman across the street. They used them as firewood."

When it comes to tearing a precious piano to bits to prevent someone else using it, a magistrate may be pardoned for finding himself a trifle nonplussed.

"Well," I said, "it cannot have been very much of a piano."

"No, sir," admitted Mary, "I got it second-hand and I paid five shillings for it."

It was somewhat difficult to keep a straight face while this domestic drama unfolded itself, but finally I came to the conclusion that the broken melody

and constraint between the two women might best be healed by binding them both over for twelve months to keep the peace.

But many of the applications are serious and reveal more legitimate grievances, for the satisfactory removal of which a magistrate often requires the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon.

Yet there is no doubt that this facility to obtain from the Court free legal advice and assistance has been a godsend to thousands of harassed citizens and does much to justify the proud description of our Summary Tribunals as the "Poor Man's Court of Justice". The questions with which a magistrate has to deal are often baffling in the extreme and sometimes quite insoluble. All the same, the mere fact of being able to ventilate their complaints personally to a magistrate has a most salutary effect and induces a more philosophic and tolerant attitude towards the alleged misdeeds of some neighbour which might otherwise lead to a breach of the peace. Sometimes, of course, one is able to give really helpful advice and assist in removing a legitimate grievance, and it is certainly not the least useful and valuable, although perhaps the least well-known, service rendered to the community by the Metropolitan Courts.

Among the questions I have frequently been asked is one from husbands and wives who wish to marry again when they have entirely lost sight for a number of years of their missing partners. What they fear, of course, is a prosecution for bigamy. This is an offence which can vary in degree perhaps more than any other. Sometimes the circumstances are such as to excite nothing but sorrowful pity, but in other cases it may be a cruel and wicked outrage and the sentences vary accordingly, although one judge cynically remarked that two wives are in themselves a sufficient punishment. It is not an offence that is triable summarily, but I have often been able to comfort applicants by telling them if they have not heard of the missing spouse for more than seven years and have made all reasonable inquiries to discover his or her whereabouts, they can marry again without fear of finding themselves in the dock of a criminal court, but I have had to warn them that if the first husband or wife should turn up at some later date the second marriage would be invalid, and it is therefore for the individuals concerned to decide whether the risk is one they would care to run. I must say that in most cases, having heard this, they leave the Court with a smile on their faces.

When the applications are over the real day's work begins. At most Courts it is customary to devote the morning to "charges", that is to say anything from murder downwards, and reserve the afternoon for the hearing of summonses, most of which are merely quasi-criminal offences at worst.

If the charge is a serious one, it is probable that the police will only be in a position to offer "evidence of arrest", and then ask the Court for a remand—either in custody or on bail. Whether bail is granted and on what terms lies entirely within the discretion of the magistrate; but as every accused person is presumed innocent until proved and adjudged guilty, it is not justifiable to refuse bail unless there are reasonable grounds for believing that the defendant might not turn up to take his trial, or that if released meanwhile he might in some way impede the police in their inquiries, by intimidating witnesses or destroying important evidence. Otherwise the gravity of the offence—or even the fact that he has been convicted before, a circumstance of which the magistrate is generally unaware—has nothing to do with it.

It is only comparatively simple cases that can be proceeded with right away, and consequently most of the morning is occupied in dealing with "remands", in which the evidence for the prosecution is now ready.

Unless the prisoner is to go for trial before a judge and jury, he is first called upon to plead "guilty" or "not guilty". If he pleads guilty, then the counsel or solicitor for the prosecution, or the police officer in charge of the case, briefly outlines the facts and gives evidence as to the character of the accused, his previous convictions and so forth. But even so, more often than not the magistrate does not feel in a position to pronounce sentence and a further remand is ordered, so that the probation officer may interview the prisoner and make private inquiries as to his personal and domestic circumstances.

In a case of real gravity the prosecution is usually represented by counsel or solicitor. If it is a police prosecution then one of the qualified and experienced assistants from the legal department of Scotland Yard or the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions will appear, and the magistrate can feel confident that the case will be clearly and impartially presented to the Court. But in all such cases he also has the duty of safeguarding the interests of the accused, and if the latter does not possess adequate means and the gravity of the case warrants it, can grant him a certificate for legal aid so that he may be defended at the public expense.

It has sometimes been suggested that there should be a Public Defender as well as a Public Prosecutor. My own view is that this is unnecessary, as ample powers to secure the defence of any accused person already exist, provided that full use is made of them, as is generally done in most Metropolitan Courts. If the prosecution is legally represented and the facts are at all complicated or it is probable some point of law may arise, a certificate for legal aid will generally be granted as a matter of course, for otherwise the accused would be placed at a serious disadvantage. This certificate is usually issued to one or other of the solicitors regularly practising before the Court. Some of the best known of them are men of long experience, well read in the law and as good or better defenders than any except the most eminent members of the Bar. West London has long been extremely fortunate in this respect, and whilst it would be invidious to mention names, it was with considerable personal gratification that some time ago I was privileged to make a presentation from the Court officials and his legal brethren to Mr. Henri Pierron, of Messrs. Pierron and Morley, in celebration of the fact that he had practised continuously in that one Court for over forty years, a truly remarkable record!

The afternoon, as I have said, is mainly devoted to the hearing of summonses, many of them arising under local by-laws and departmental orders. Of the last mentioned the war has provided a never-ending stream, and the maximum penalties are often extremely severe. Imprisonment for lengthy periods and fines running into many thousands of pounds have frequently been imposed by the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction. One such fine amounted to no less than £150,000, which I should imagine is unique in the annals of the Police Court.

The matrimonial jurisdiction is another development that, year by year, is growing in importance. Magistrates' Courts now deal on an average with more than 15,000 cases in a year, at least three to four times as many as the Divorce Court. Although the parties belong mostly to the poorer sections of

the community, the issues raised are no less difficult and delicate than in the case of those more fortunately placed from a material point of view. Of all a magistrate's duties this is perhaps the most onerous and incidentally the most exhausting. More often than not his decision changes the whole lives of the parties concerned and vitally affects the happiness and well-being of their children as well.

Matrimonial cases are heard *in camera*, the Press being only allowed to report them in barest outlines, and every effort is made to get away from a "police-court" atmosphere and conduct them in a spirit of friendly and sympathetic understanding. This is as it should be, for the parties are certainly not criminals. In their own estimation they are for the most part deeply wronged individuals, who have shown the utmost Christian fortitude and forbearance under the most trying circumstances. Indeed, one of the greatest difficulties is to get them to see that there can possibly be another side than their own. In West London, where there is a large residential population, one or two afternoons a week are exclusively devoted to matrimonial work. Orders can be obtained for separation or maintenance or for maintenance alone, and for the custody and maintenance of children. The principal grounds upon which such orders are made are desertion, persistent cruelty and wilful neglect to maintain, habitual drunkenness and adultery. Unfortunately the utmost relief the Court can grant is a judicial separation, which often has the effect of merely accentuating the mischief. There is no possibility, as in the case of divorce, of making a fresh start, and, moreover, an income which will suffice for a husband, wife and children living together often proves quite inadequate to maintain them when living apart. If you leave the man too little, he will lose heart and cease to bother, and there will be constant summonses for arrears, with the possibility of imprisonment if he is obviously recalcitrant, and this generally means the wife gets nothing. If, on the other hand, you give his wife too little, she may not do justice to herself or the children, and she sinks into a slut.

There is no doubt that the war has played havoc with the domestic lives of countless couples, whose marriages have literally been dragged up by the roots, and it is probable that for some years after the war an even greater proportion of our time may have to be devoted to unravelling the innumerable domestic tangles which the present abnormal conditions have created. If there had been no war most of the couples with whom I have had to deal in recent years would probably have jogged along contentedly enough. But the war made all the difference, with the husband serving in the Forces, probably overseas, the wife doing full-time work on munitions and the children evacuated. The home has been broken up, the family separated, and far too often the inevitable happens, with its aftermath in the police-court. The husband finds another woman, the wife takes a lover and the parents cease to regard the children as their special responsibility. As a result there is a summons for desertion or maintenance or for guardianship of the children. The difficulty a magistrate often has to face is that none of the conditions any longer exist which in normal times held most homes together, and yet it is essential to move cautiously in order that, if possible, the hope may not be altogether lost of a restoration of home life after the war. This is a grave responsibility and constitutes one of the most serious social problems with which we are confronted.

The causes of marital unhappiness are legion, but I will say that I have seldom, if ever, come across a case where the fault lay entirely on one side.

More often than not it is "six of one and half a dozen of the other", and what is needed is a mutual spirit of give and take. It has been suggested by some high legal authorities that the Summary Courts should be given the power to grant divorce. Provided that the Court was presided over by a Chairman with legal training and experience, I believe this would be an inestimable boon to thousands of persons who cannot afford the expense involved in a petition to the High Court and for whom even the Poor Persons' Rules are frequently inadequate. The issues to be tried on a divorce petition are for the most part identical with those involved in making a separation order. It can scarcely be argued, therefore, that the Magistrate's Court would be incompetent to deal with it, for it is something that is being done almost every day.

Among the minor problems with which a magistrate has to deal are applications from young persons under twenty-one for permission to marry when, for some reason or other, it is not forthcoming from the parents. During the war these have been of frequent occurrence, especially from foreign refugees who have lost all touch with their parents. In addition many of our own young people are earning such enormously high wages in munitions and other ways that, perhaps not unnaturally, their thoughts increasingly turn towards matrimony, whilst the parents often, and rightly, take a more sober view regarding the abnormal and transient conditions that now prevail and the undesirability of their children plunging into marriage under such circumstances. When this happens the young people, imbued with a sense of their importance and a feeling of independence, rush to the Court and demand that the magistrate should override the decisions of their hard-hearted elders.

It is not easy to determine the angle from which one ought to approach the matter. So widespread is the public interest that one of the "popular" Sunday newspapers recently put the question to Dr. C. E. M. Joad, of the B.B.C. Brains Trust, as to what he would do, and, like the Delphic Oracle, this eminent philosopher's reply left the problem entirely unsolved. Having made the startling discovery that marriage is a lottery and that a great many marriages disappoint the hopes of those who enter into them at all ages, his view is apparently that no magistrate nor anyone else is justified in attempting to guide or forbid the steps of young people in such a matter. With all due respect this is surely rather nonsense.

In the first place the magistrate, rightly or wrongly, has a duty placed upon him by the law and must therefore do the best he can. Secondly, it is only when the parents have definitely withheld their approval that he comes into the picture at all. But according to Dr. Joad even the parents themselves should have no such powers of veto, and if any boy or girl above the age of sixteen wishes to marry no one has the right to say them nay, or even to impose a period of delay. Of course it is obvious that some people of every age marry unwisely and that one cannot guarantee matrimonial felicity. All the same, if certain material considerations are borne in mind, the marriage is likely to have a better chance of success once the first bloom of romance has worn off and the parties "have descended from the heights of Mont Blanc and started their sober pedestrian journey to the plains".

It is these considerations which a magistrate has to examine.

What I try to do myself is first of all to make up my mind what kind of people the parents are and if they strike one as being reasonable common-sense folk. Then I inquire as to the relations existing between the young

people and their parents before they became obsessed with each other's charms and attractions. I ask how long they have known each other and also what efforts they have made to persuade their parents as to the desirability of the proposed union. I try to form some idea of their individual dispositions and characters. The financial position of the parties has also to be considered, as well as their future prospects, bearing in mind that the marriage may lead to an early increase in the family. Each application must be decided on its merits, and, as the circumstances in each case may be entirely different, one cannot lay down any hard and fast rule. Whilst trying to treat the young couple whose affections are so deeply engaged with every sympathy, one has to look at the matter from the point of view of cold common sense. In other words, is it likely that they will be able to start and continue their matrimonial adventure under reasonably satisfactory conditions from a material point of view? If not, then it is surely wise to make them wait a while, and very often I recommend them to renew their application at a later date, after having made a further effort to convince their parents that their lives' happiness is likely to be involved in the proposed plan and that they really do know their own minds. At all events it is a much more difficult and complicated matter than Joad would have us believe, and a magistrate would not to my mind be fulfilling his duty if he was merely to wash his hands of all responsibility as the learned professor suggests.

One of the most difficult and painful of a magistrate's war-time duties is dealing with conscientious objectors. In all such cases the man or woman concerned has already applied for exemption to one of the special tribunals set up to decide such matters, and the application has either been rejected altogether or exemption has been granted on condition that he or she undertakes some form of non-combatant service—on the land or in nursing or civil defence. When this happens the next step is an order to attend for medical examination, and when this order is disobeyed the objector appears before the magistrate to explain his default. If he persists in his refusal the only alternative provided by the law is either to impose a fine, which many objectors announce in advance they have no intention of paying, or send them to prison for a maximum period of twelve months. But more often than not this is quite useless, as it merely confers on them the halo of martyrdom for the sake of their conscience. Whilst the only duty of a magistrate is to do his best to administer the law with justice and impartiality, there are occasions when it is not easy to keep one's patience, and I have often wondered how these people really justify their existence. For the most part they are fanatically sincere, but so illogical and inconsistent that it is difficult to understand their point of view. Moreover, their attitude of complacency and moral self-righteousness is often almost unbearable; they are so sure they are right and as a consequence that everyone else must be wrong. Yet it is impossible to forget those many hundreds and thousands of others who have sacrificed everything they held dear, even life itself, for ideals no less sincere.

But for the life of me I cannot see how conscience really enters into it. To take part in the defence of the country in time of war and to obey the law is surely an inescapable duty of citizenship, exactly comparable with paying one's taxes or undertaking any similar obligation in peace-time, even if imposed by a Government one does not happen to support and of whose general policy one disapproves. To take advantage throughout one's life of everything the country has to offer: the protection of the law, which itself is based in the last

resort upon force and compulsion against other people, of course, freedom of thought and speech, housing, health and educational facilities and indeed the whole apparatus of a civilized State, and yet when all these things are threatened and the country itself in danger from death and destruction by a ruthless and barbarous foe—to stand aside on the plea of conscience seems to me little short of treachery. We all realize that war is bloody, cruel and futile, and on that account it is surely the duty of every true Christian to assist in the overthrow of those who have brought such miseries upon mankind. To stand aside is merely to encourage the warmongers and assist in the triumph of their evil designs. For the conscientious objector, every mouthful he eats and every night's sleep he gets are entirely due to the efforts and agonies of other people to whom he is unwilling to lend a hand and whom he apparently regards as morally inferior to himself. He prefers to go on living his own life in comparative safety, if possible well out of reach of bombs, leaving others to toil and sweat and run risks to preserve for him the kind of life he has been accustomed to lead.

I believe we are the only country that recognizes a conscientious objection of this kind. Surely there is force in the argument that those who refuse to play their part should not only be penalized by the law but regarded as defaulters towards the society in which they live. However, as matters stand a magistrate can only endeavour to administer the law without prejudice or bias.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 compelled the Metropolitan Courts to adapt themselves to new and strange conditions. Particularly was this so during the summer and autumn of 1940, when the daylight raids were at their height. In those early days, whenever an Alert was sounded it was the accepted practice in accordance with Home Office instructions to adjourn the Court and immediately "go to earth" in the cellars underneath.

It was certainly a queer experience to try to dispense justice under such conditions. During that time I frequently found myself sitting in a small underground room measuring some six feet by eight, the outside walls of which had been heavily sandbagged and the roof strengthened with pit props and wooden beams. The furniture consisted of a couple of benches and a small deal table, at which there was just sufficient space for the Clerk of the Court and myself, whilst on the other side of it, a foot or two away, stood the prisoner and a gaoler. The witnesses used to lean across and sometimes literally "breathe" their evidence into my ear. There was not much room for anyone else—a solicitor or two maybe, the Court usher, and of course a representative of the Press, in order that the fiction of a "public hearing" might be maintained. Meanwhile the ack-ack guns boomed and spluttered in the distance.

Later on, however, we became acclimatized and took little notice of such distractions unless there was heavy gunfire in the vicinity.

But in other ways also there were many surprises, not all of them unpleasant ones. The crime situation generally was very much better than had been anticipated. At first the "powers that be" were seriously alarmed about what might happen, especially during the black-out. It was feared that all kinds of nefarious activities would be facilitated by the cloak of darkness, and that the police would be unable to cope with them, especially as so many of the younger men had been transferred to the armed forces.

Fortunately these gloomy forebodings proved unfounded. So far from crime increasing, it tended for a brief space to disappear altogether. This, how-

ever, was an emotional reaction which did not last long. In a few weeks, so far as crime proper was concerned, we were almost back to normal, and so it has remained ever since. Even in 1940 there was only a one per cent drop compared with 1939.

However, many other offences—particularly those of a merely quasi-criminal character—showed a marked decrease, but for this the reasons were more obvious. When the danger of invasion was imminent and the strain on our man-power became very great, the police literally had not the time to deal with many minor offences. For instance, motoring summonses showed a steady decline, partly owing, of course, to the petrol restrictions. Similarly there were fewer "drunks", and the street bookmaker made only a rare appearance.

On the other hand, innumerable new "crimes" were created under the various defence regulations, of which there was an increasing flood coming from almost every Government Department, often couched, I am bound to say, in almost unintelligible language, which it was the magistrate's duty to interpret as best he could.

Taken as a whole, therefore, the volume of work during the war—at all events so far as West London was concerned—has been as great as ever, whilst war-time conditions have accentuated the pathos and tragedy so often inherent in many of these cases.

When the Blitz on London began there was quite a scare about the question of looting—so much so that Parliament took the revolutionary step of reviving the death penalty for such acts. Happily, and it speaks volumes for the innate sense of law and order of our people, no case of sufficient gravity to send a man to the gallows ever arose, and only in a very few was it necessary to impose a sentence of penal servitude. The vast majority were dealt with by the Magistrates' Courts. I have myself had a good many of these so-called "looters" before me, and all that it generally amounted to was petty pilfering, the taking of "unconsidered trifles" which might be thought to have been abandoned by their owners. A few statistics are worth recording. Fourteen per cent of the looters were schoolboys and 45 per cent were under twenty-one. In October 1940, the first month of the heavy air-raids on London and the provinces, there were 1,662 cases altogether. By November these had fallen to 1,463, and by December to 920. When the raids stopped there was, of course, a progressive decline, and, so far as the police-courts are concerned, looting soon became an ugly memory of the past.

There is, however, one aspect of the crime situation, a grave one, to which a brief reference must be made: namely the problem of juvenile delinquency. Even before the war more than half of the indictable crime of the country was committed by young persons under the age of twenty-one, and although no recent statistics are available I have little doubt from my own experience that the war has brought about a substantial increase. In dealing with these young offenders a magistrate is often at his wits' end to know what to do for the best. Nothing is more important, for it is, of course, in their hands that the future lies. Prison is no solution, indeed in nine cases out of ten it does more harm than good. A young person sentenced to imprisonment may hate the first few days of it, but during subsequent weeks or months he is apt to become dangerously acclimatized: its anticipated terrors, which otherwise

might have constituted a valuable deterrent, have proved to be not so bad after all. If the sentence is a short one he is inclined to look upon himself, and to be regarded by his pals, as a kind of hero, and suffers no social stigma whatever. If sent to Borstal he is too often released after a few months owing to shortage of staff and accommodation, and very soon gets into trouble again. The number of training homes and hostels is quite inadequate, and, generally speaking, the whole question bristles with difficulty.

One of the most serious factors is the decline in parental authority. With many of these young people the home influence nowadays seems to be nil. It is not merely that the parents have no control, but in many instances they do not apparently want such control or recognize their individual responsibility towards their children in the very least. They do not want to be disturbed or put to any trouble, and I am often shocked at the number of parents who openly admit that their children are entirely beyond their control and are quite content to have forfeited their authority.

There is also the fact that, since the war and owing to the shortage of labour, many of these young people have been earning far more money than is good for them. During the past year or two I have frequently had before me lads of fifteen to seventeen receiving £5, £6 and even £10 a week who would have been lucky before the war to earn £1 or 25s. Of these inflated earnings their mothers possibly manage to extract 30s or so to cover their keep, and the rest they spend on "wine, women and song"; in other words, at the public-house and the cinema, in company with girls who not infrequently present a more difficult problem than the boys.

Although in regard to the adult population it is certainly far from true that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male"—indeed offences by women are not more than one-third of those committed by men, in spite of their numerical superiority—I regret to say that this does not apply in the case of juveniles. The most recent official figures show that the number of girls under sixteen appearing in the juvenile courts has increased 125 per cent in a year. In Victorian days parents like the late Mr. Moulton Barrett, in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, ruled their families—and particularly their daughters—with unbelievable harshness, but now the pendulum seems to have swung too far in the opposite direction. It is not much use talking about better homes for the people and all kinds of improved labour-saving devices unless we can instil or restore at the same time a few of the old-fashioned virtues.

Of course there are other circumstances which adversely affect the situation at the present time, such as the closing down of clubs and recreational facilities, reduced opportunities for educational development, the excitement and unsettlement due to the war, the many stories of stirring and lawless deeds in the papers and on the films and wireless.

But in spite of all this, and without seeking to minimize its gravity, I should hesitate to label myself as an alarmist. I hope and believe the position will gradually right itself after the war, when more normal conditions are restored. After all, a more or less similar state of affairs prevailed at the time of the last war. I am afraid, however, that a certain increase in juvenile delinquency constitutes part of the price—and not the least serious part—which a nation at war must inevitably pay.

In the meantime it is essential to have patience and sympathy in dealing with these young people, the normal routine of whose lives has been so rudely shattered by war, but at the same time magistrates must not allow their judgment to be clouded, as it is with some people, by excessive sentimentality. In

the interests of the juveniles themselves, as well as the community at large, a firm hand is often needed, and it is perhaps the lack of this firmness which constitutes the most serious criticism against the juvenile courts which in other respects have done such excellent work since they were first established some thirty-six years ago. Sometimes we hear talk about the demoralizing atmosphere of the police-courts, indeed for this reason it has been laid down that juvenile courts are to be held in a different building altogether, and policemen are not allowed to appear there in uniform lest it should have an unduly terrifying effect on the juvenile mind. Could there be greater nonsense? It is well known that many children regard the "man in blue" as their best friend, while some of the others badly need to be made to realize the terrors of the law.

Similarly we are sometimes told that most adults summoned to appear at the police-courts, either as defendants or witnesses, are so overcome by the solemnity of their surroundings as to be rendered more or less speechless. I can only say that I have seldom seen any signs of it—in fact there are few Courts in which a less awe-inspiring and more friendly atmosphere prevails. The cases are often sordid, but I know of no other tribunal where order is better preserved or where the proceedings are conducted with greater decorum and dignity. There are certainly many County Courts which compare very unfavourably with most of the Metropolitan police-courts, both in atmosphere and procedure.

Generally speaking, nothing has been more remarkable than the spirit of law and order prevailing among all classes of the population during the war. As a result the police have had a far easier task than most people anticipated would be the case. Indeed Sir Philip Game, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, particularly stressed this in his Report for 1940, when he said:

I would like to emphasize the universal feeling among all ranks of the police force that their task has been immeasurably lightened by the magnificent reaction of the public and the courage and determination shown by all classes of the people.

On the other hand, one cannot but feel somewhat disturbed by the way in which war-time conditions are apparently tending to lower the general standard of honesty and by the increasing numbers of men and women of hitherto exemplary character who appear before the Courts charged with theft and dishonesty. What makes matters worse is that many of them—especially those employed in large food-distributing depots and similar places—do not seem to realize the heinousness of their offence, and think it an adequate excuse to plead there is so much stuff lying around and so many others are helping themselves.

The two most prolific sources of crime are undoubtedly drink and gambling. So far as the former is concerned, however, there has been a widespread improvement during the last few decades. Thirty or forty years ago it was no unusual thing for a Metropolitan Court to have fifty or more such cases every day, and I have been told one used to see the "drunks" lining up outside the Court like in a pit queue at a theatre. Nowadays three or four are about the average. The improvement has also been accentuated by the war—so many men are now in the Services, and if they get drunk are dealt with by the military authorities, although as a matter of fact they apparently do not to any considerable extent. No doubt the difficulty and expense of obtaining alcoholic refreshment of any kind has in itself amounted to a real measure of prohibition. Unfortunately the cheap pernicious home-made wines—"Red

Biddy" and the like—are still on sale, and there has been an increased amount of methylated spirit drinking; but on the whole the improvement compared with the bad old days is very marked.

With regard to betting and gambling, however, I am afraid the reverse is the case, in spite of the fact that prosecutions for street betting have almost disappeared. But this is largely because the police are too busy to give the necessary time to these cases. In any event there is nothing they dislike more than pursuing the street bookmaker. It is too much like spying, and I fancy the police themselves have the feeling, which most magistrates share, as to the inequality of the law relating to betting, for everyone knows that, whilst the street bookmaker is subject to the most severe penalties, other people in more affluent circumstances can bet to their hearts' content without any interference whatever.

I should, however, be the last to defend gambling or ignore its disastrous and anti-social consequences. Indeed, I am inclined to agree that on the whole it is a greater social evil than drunkenness. A prison chaplain once told me that, of all classes of criminals, he had found gamblers to be the most irclaimable.

The part which betting and gambling plays in our national life is not generally realized. Some years ago I was a member of the Select Committee set up by Parliament to investigate this whole matter in connection with Mr. Winston Churchill's proposed tax on betting. We were then given some very startling information. It was estimated that the total national expenditure on gambling was about £400,000,000 a year—indeed, some competent experts believed that this estimate was too low. The greatest item was horse-racing, which, according to the Racecourse Betting Control Board, had a turnover before the war of about £250,000,000 a year. Football pools accounted for another 30 to 40 millions, and incidentally provided a substantial source of revenue for the Post Office. In 1938 about 30,000,000 "pool" letters a week were despatched out of a population of some 46,000,000. It has been said, probably with truth, that there are more people in England engaged in the propagation of betting than in the propagation of religion. All this has led to the creation of vested interests which shamelessly play on human weakness and credulity. Sport has long been tending to become a mere adjunct of gambling instead of gambling being an adjunct of sport. To a certain extent I dare say the gambling instinct is inherent in human nature, but nevertheless the State and the law, in the public interest, must do what they can to curb it, although there is no class of offence with which a magistrate finds it more difficult to deal justly and without bias; so much depends on the individual point of view.

No matter for how long one may sit on the Bench of a London police-court, never a day passes in which one does not learn something about human nature. The depths of human credulity seem to have no limits and constantly fill one with amazement. Whenever a few people are gathered together, especially in a great city like London, the confidence trickster is bound to turn up, and apparently, in spite of many warnings as to his activities, he has no difficulty whatever in getting away with it.

Yet some of the ruses employed are so incredibly crude and the stories with which they gull their victims have done duty on so many previous occasions, that one cannot help being astonished at the inexhaustible supply of fools ready to believe them.

Another strange feature of this particular type of crime is that the victims for the most part are not, as one would expect, simple-minded folk from the provinces, country parsons and the like, but hard-headed men of business, who seem to lose for the time being all their acumen and indeed common sense, and to be dazzled by the prospect of getting something for nothing. Perhaps a psycho-analyst might explain it as a reaction to the humdrum routine of commercial life, in which every penny has to be struggled for, that leads the victim straight into the net of the confidence man.

Almost every week someone is caught by the stalest tricks in the trickster's repertoire, tricks that have been exposed a thousand times in the newspapers and yet always seem fresh to somebody. For instance, there is the man who drops his wallet or his keys on the pavement in front of you. You pick them up and return them. He is, of course, most grateful and suggests a little light refreshment. This leads to an exchange of confidences and a story about a large sum of money which the trickster has at his disposal, and a suggestion that he will be prepared to make some of it over if the victim first of all will deposit with him some tangible monetary proof of his good faith. Needless to say, neither the deposit nor the gentleman in question are ever heard of again. That one trick alone, with minor variations, has been successful in extracting thousands of pounds from the pockets of the unwary.

Before the war nearly fifty per cent of all the cases in the London Magistrates' Courts were directly or indirectly concerned with motor-cars. What with ordinary traffic offences, unattended cars, driving licences, insurance certificates, the ever-present temptation to steal from cars, pedestrian crossings, automatic traffic controls, dangerous driving, manslaughter, smash-and-grab raids—most of which would be impossible were it not for the motor-car and a quick get-away—and innumerable other offences, I have sometimes wondered what the police had to do before the motor-car was invented. Of course, during the war and owing to the cessation of private motoring, we have been relieved of most of these cases, but there is not much doubt that when the war ends we shall again be faced with the problem in an even more acute form. Indeed, during the war there is still the appalling fact that more people are killed and injured on the roads of Britain every year than in many big battles. The estimate still holds good that unless preventive measures are taken one in every four of the children born in this country today will ultimately be killed or mutilated on the roads.

No one could sit, as I have done, on the Bench of a Metropolitan Court for over ten years without having a few pet reforms he would like to see carried into effect. Mainly they are connected with matters of procedure—for I do not propose to tread the thorny path of the law reformer—but none the less important on that account. To begin with, I think it would be of distinct public advantage if, instead of having some fourteen separate Courts scattered over the whole Metropolitan police area and in many instances located in extremely ungetatable places, they were grouped together at three or four really convenient centres. It is possible, of course, that those whose duty or inclination bring them to the Courts might have a little farther to travel, but I doubt whether any serious objection would be raised, as I feel sure there would be corresponding compensations. I am convinced that the advantages of having several Courts and magistrates sitting under one roof would be considerable. The work could then be far more evenly distributed and expeditiously

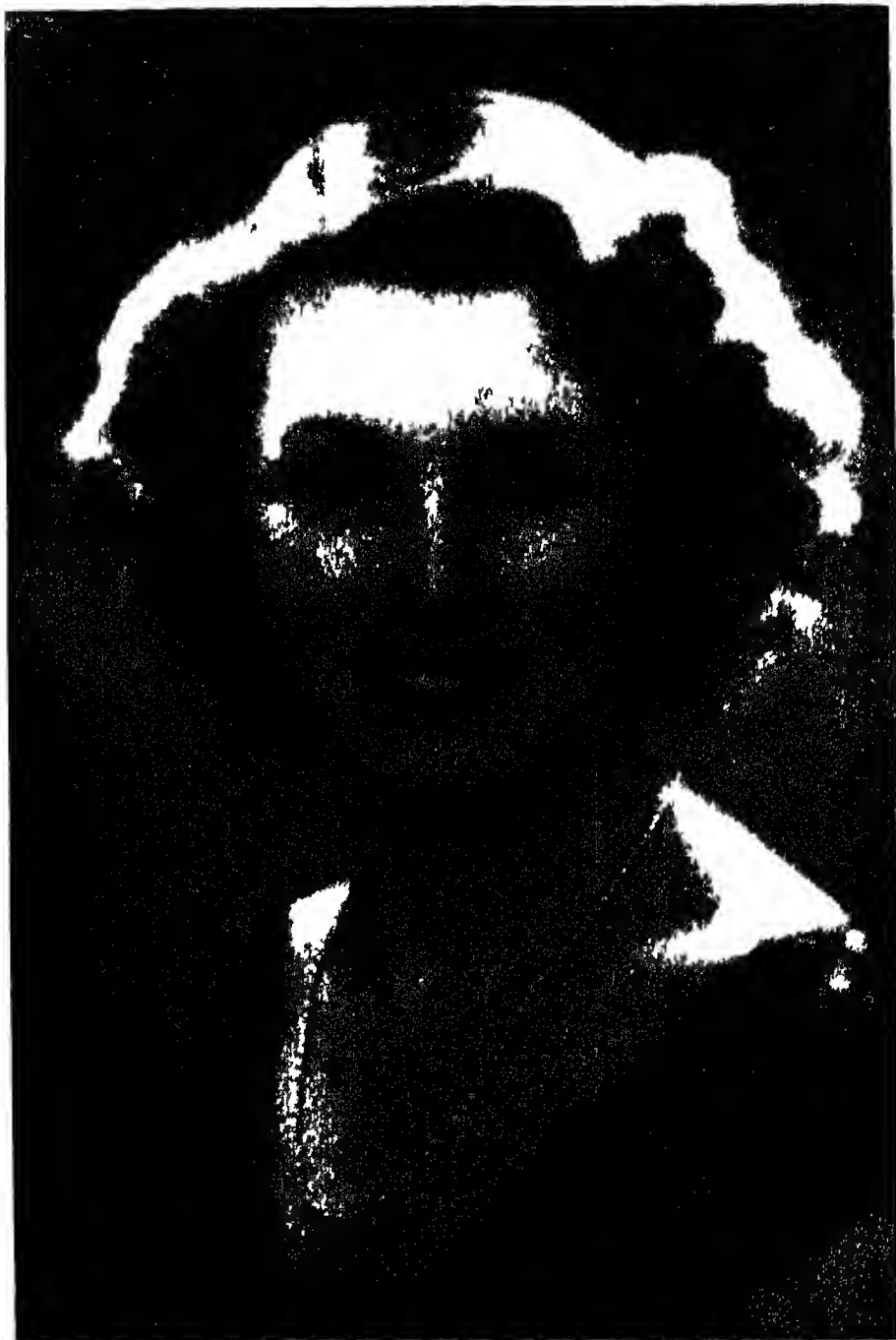


[From a photograph taken by the Author]

A VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND, 1924

Back Row (left to right): General Makins, M.P., Commander Fletcher, M.P. (now Lord Winster), Captain Reginald Berkeley, M.P., Sir William Jowitt, K.C., M.P., Colonel England, M.P., Hon. Barclay-Harvey, M.P., Tom Macdonald, M.P. (Northern Ireland).

Front Row: W. G. Emery (Lobby Correspondent of *Morning Post*), Sir Thomas Hungerford, Sir E. Herdman, Viscount Curzon, M.P. (now Earl Howe), George Balfour, M.P., Miss Herdman, Colonel G. K. Mason, M.P.



[Pias] Freeman

SYLVIA
(MRS. FERENC GALLO)

dealt with, because it would be possible to transfer cases from one magistrate's list to another, according to their length and other circumstances, as is the usual practice in the High Court and at the Assizes. In no other way can the inevitable unevenness in the flow of work be obviated and practical remedy provided for what seems otherwise unavoidable: namely that most Courts on any given day are in danger of being swamped altogether by the volume of the work, or, on the other hand, of having little or nothing to do. Not only that, but it would be of great benefit to the magistrates themselves if they were not so isolated from one another, but were brought into daily contact and able to discuss problems and difficulties arising out of their work. In this way greater uniformity would be achieved and the administration of justice rendered less uncertain.

Another point that urgently needs attention is the existing procedure of taking depositions in cases which are to be committed for trial in a higher Court. In a large number of these it is perfectly clear from the outset that the defendant intends to plead guilty. Often he says as much at the start, but yet the whole of the witnesses for the prosecution have to be called and every detail of their evidence laboriously written down in longhand by the Clerk of the Court, a task that sometimes occupies many hours of the Court's time, although it is obvious that in all probability they will never be looked at. How much better it would be if it were permissible in such cases to invite the accused to plead guilty or not guilty in the Magistrate's Court, and in the former event merely forward to the Quarter Sessions or the Old Bailey a brief statement of the facts. If the accused later desired to withdraw his plea and contest the case, it would still be possible to give notice to the prosecution and in the higher Court call the witnesses necessary to prove the facts contained in the original statement. Furthermore, it would be a great advantage if there was an official shorthand writer attached to each Metropolitan Court, so as to avoid the necessity, as at present, of taking elaborate notes in longhand, as a result of which so much time is wasted.

The absurd distinction should also be abolished between cases that can be dealt with summarily and those which cannot. As matters now stand, the Magistrates' Courts are involved in a morass of archaic anachronisms, which involve expense, delay and an unwarrantable interference with the simple and efficient administration of the law. In this connection, Mr. Bumble's aphorism that "the law is a hass" is not entirely without foundation.

For instance, could anything be more ridiculous than that a man who steals a Rolls-Royce car or a valuable diamond necklace worth many thousands of pounds can be tried and sentenced by the magistrate, but a man who has been entrusted with £10 of his workmate's money to save for the holidays and makes away with it can only be sentenced at the Assizes or Quarter Sessions? If a man steals a cart he may, as in the case of a motor-car, be dealt with in the police-court, but if there happens to be a donkey between the shafts then he must solemnly be committed to the Assizes or Sessions, however trifling the value of the purloined animal. Again, a man who steals a wallet containing £500 can have his case carefully and thoroughly investigated by a magistrate in twenty-four hours, but the man who forces open the door or window of a bungalow and steals a packet of cigarettes must be sent to the Assizes or Sessions, where there is all the panoply of ceremonial procedure, where he must have counsel to defend him, for a solicitor has no right of audience, and where often he will only be tried after weary weeks of waiting.

In general appearance all the Magistrates' Courts look much the same and consist of a large room panelled in dark wood of which on one side is the witness-box with sounding-board above it, whilst on a ledge is the Bible and printed form of oath. It is here that witnesses swear to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", and then in many instances proceed to do the exact opposite. David said in his haste: "All men are liars." "Yes, and if he had sat long in this Court he would have said it at his leisure," caustically commented Mr. Justice Maule. I must confess I have often felt the same and wondered whether the taking of the oath has any real value; for of many witnesses it might certainly be said with justification that if seen coming down the street between Ananias and Sapphira one would feel they were in the bosom of their family! The whole procedure of taking of the oath needs to be reconsidered. Additional solemnity might possibly be given to it if everyone in Court—judges and public alike—as is the practice in some foreign countries, were to rise to their feet. I am afraid, however, that more often than not, as matters stand, the oath is looked upon as the purest formality and has little or no effect on the testimony that is subsequently given.

On the other side of the Court is a pen to accommodate counsel and the Press, for it is, of course, the presence of the latter that guarantees a proper publicity for our judicial proceedings. In front of the Bench, stretching across the Court, is the solicitors' desk, thus separating, so far as the legal profession is concerned, the sheep from the goats, though far be it from me to say which is which! Above that, on a dais, sits the Clerk of the Court making his notes, whilst above him, on a still higher dais, is the magistrate. He wears no wig or gown nor other distinctive dress, and the only visible sign of his authority is the royal coat of arms attached to the wall above his head. Whether magistrates should wear robes similar to those of other judicial authorities is a point upon which opinions differ. Personally I am in favour of their doing so, if only to differentiate in the public mind the professional from the lay magistrate. It is sometimes argued that robes are unnecessary, in that the dignity and prestige of the Court are adequately maintained without these appendages, but of course this argument would equally apply to the High Court and County Court judges.

Facing the magistrate's Bench is the dock, an ugly iron-railinged affair, which might very well be abolished as a "relic of barbarism". It is difficult to see why accused persons—who are all presumed to be innocent until their guilt is proved—should be subjected to the indignity of being placed in the dock, and I feel it would be much better if they were accommodated on chairs behind their advocates, which would have the additional advantage of facilitating consultation between them whilst the case is in progress. In the old days, when violence and lawlessness were much more rife, a dock may have been necessary in order to segregate the accused from other people in Court, but this no longer applies today, when any display of violence on the part of the accused is an extremely rare occurrence.

Since I have been on the Bench nothing has impressed me more than the part now played by science in the detection of crime. Although our old friend Sherlock Holmes knew all about it, in actual practice this is a comparatively modern development. Today, however, the police force has at its disposal forensic laboratories staffed by qualified experts in chemistry, biology, physics, botany, zoology, microscopia and medicine. With their assistance innumerable offenders have been brought to justice who otherwise would have escaped their

just deserts owing to the lack of just this kind of evidence. A speck of dust, a few flakes of mud, a scrap of soiled paper, a fragment of glass, a footmark or a fingerprint often prove to be vital links in the chain of evidence for the prosecution. Indeed, almost any detail, however trivial, may be of value nowadays in bringing home the guilt of the accused. Of course such evidence has to be weighed, tested and examined with scrupulous care, but the main point in its favour is that it is impersonal and objective and not subject to the ordinary limitations of human fallibility.

For instance, can anything be more fascinating than the gradual growth and development of the fingerprint system? It is less than thirty years ago since Sir Edward Henry introduced his famous methods of classifying fingerprints, which enabled this formidable instrument of detection to be put to practical use.

Today the system has been adopted by every police force in the world, although originally, like many other discoveries and inventions, it was scoffed at and derided. I can myself remember the outcry when Sir Richard Muir announced in the early part of the present century that he intended to rely on fingerprints alone to prove a charge of murder. At the time this created quite a sensation. Many eminent judges and scientists were highly sceptical, and expressed themselves as highly apprehensive that a human life should depend on such a new-fangled doubtful idea.

Nevertheless Muir was able to satisfy the jury as to the reliability of his fingerprint system and the murderer was duly hanged. The Press emphasized that here was a "new peril to law-breakers", and one newspaper pertinently declared that "the criminal classes will very soon make the new invention a back-number by wearing gloves when committing burglaries".

It is, of course, true that gloves now play an important part in the outfit of any burglar or housebreaker. Indeed, if a person accused of such an offence is found in the possession of a pair of gloves it creates grave suspicion against him. Incidentally, it is worth noting, however, that recently it was found possible to obtain a recognizable fingerprint from the inside of a glove.

The actual impressions are always produced in Court, in order to safeguard the criminal as well as the prosecution, since it would not be fair for an implication to be raised in the minds of the Tribunal that a person had previous convictions by the injudicious production of an old set of prints or by reference to a comparison of the marks found on the scene of the crime with the prisoner's prints in criminal records. Indeed, if this happens the case may be dismissed.

Another interesting thing about it is that, no matter how much the fingers may be mutilated, the skin grows again with the same identical marking. In the early days it was by no means unusual for criminals deliberately to lacerate their fingers in the most horrible way so as to avoid identification. But they soon discovered to their consternation that their sufferings were in vain, as the police merely had to wait until the fingers were healed, when the original markings were revealed and the criminal record of the accused could be traced with unfailing accuracy.

Not the least remarkable feature of the system is the ease with which a particular set of fingerprints can be identified, in spite of the fact that among the many millions examined at Scotland Yard no two have ever been discovered alike. Yet, no matter where the person has been convicted before, no matter in what part of the world, no matter what name he may have given on any previous occasion—if his fingerprints are anywhere in the possession of the police his complete criminal record can be traced without difficulty.

Some time ago I paid a visit to the Fingerprint Department at Scotland Yard. Among other things they have there is the gruesome exhibit of a human finger in a bottle. This represents one of the strangest mysteries the Department has ever been asked to solve. It appears that a lady living in Hampstead found a newly severed human finger lying on the mat in her hall. She promptly called in the police, who questioned everybody in the house. No one had apparently lost a finger nor could offer any suggestion as to how the unfortunate digit had found its way into the hall. There was no trace of any forcible entry, there was no trace of blood in any of the rooms, and the C.I.D. were completely baffled. It was hoped that the fingerprint experts might be able to throw some light on the matter and perhaps trace the finger to some criminal among its records. But these showed nothing except that the owner of it had not been previously convicted. Several days later, however, the mystery was cleared up. It was discovered that a local butcher had had the misfortune, when cutting up some meat, to sever his finger with his own knife. It had fallen on the floor, and at that very moment a dog had entered the shop, seized the finger and carried it off in triumph to his master's house, where he deposited it on the mat in the hall.

There would seem to be no particular reason why the fingerprint system should not be extended to cover the entire population, although doubtless the filing of such an enormous number of prints might present difficulties. It would, however, have obvious advantages in the tracing and identification of missing persons and preventing impersonation and checking up generally as well as identifying undesirable aliens. It would also get rid of the idea that there is something disgraceful in having one's fingerprints taken. So strong is this feeling that positive instructions have been issued to the police to destroy immediately the fingerprints of any person acquitted of a crime so that they can never be used against him should he on any future occasion fall into the hands of the police.

This is not the place to discuss at any length the old controversy regarding lay or stipendiary magistrates. I will only say that I have never been able to understand why the Magisterial Bench should be the only judicial position in the country which it is assumed can be adequately filled by those who possess no legal training or qualifications whatsoever. If such training and experience are unnecessary, then why not appoint laymen to the High Court and County Court Benches as well? Whilst it is true that intricate questions of law do not arise quite so frequently in the Summary Courts as in the High Court or County Court, yet the fact remains that in every Court of first instance it is issues of fact and not of law that comprise nine-tenths of the work.

We are told that it serves an important public interest for laymen to be directly associated with the administration of justice; but is such public interest really served by giving laymen—the majority of whom have never had the most elementary training in the rules of evidence or the basic principles of criminal law—full powers to deal with the liberties of their fellow-subjects, and leave them without any guidance or technical assistance other than is provided by their clerk? If I may hazard a personal opinion, I have no doubt that the public interest would be far better secured if the whole of the judicial work of the Summary Courts were done by properly qualified stipendiary magistrates, appointed, as all other judicial authorities are, by the Lord Chancellor. But if part-time unpaid magistrates are to be retained, then it is surely essential

that the chairman of every Bench should be someone possessing legal qualifications. Not only should he have knowledge of the criminal law and procedure, but be capable of controlling the Court without the assistance or interference of the Clerk, who otherwise is in the anomalous position of possessing the real power of decision without the responsibility which should attach to it.

Whilst many lay justices do their work well, especially when advised by a capable and tactful clerk, there are few members of the Bar practising at all regularly in the Summary Courts who do not agree that the administration of justice by certain local Benches leaves much to be desired.

And yet the importance of Courts of Summary Jurisdiction is growing day by day. Almost every year more and more offences which formerly could only be tried before a judge and jury are dealt with by the Magistrates' Courts, with the free consent of the accused. Therefore nothing is more essential than that they should be presided over by a man or woman with the requisite qualifications and the time to give to this important work.

A philosopher once said: "Let me write the songs of a nation and anyone who likes may make her laws." His idea was that songs which circulate among the people are better known and do more to influence the hearts and guide the conduct of men than any legal enactments. But it must be remembered that without just laws we should be in no mood to sing even the best of songs, and for this reason it has been well said that of all her sons the good law-maker and the upright judge are a nation's greatest and most enduring benefactors.

The Solomon of ancient Israel with all his glory has passed away, but the laws of Moses are affecting countless millions today. The code of Draco did more for Greece than the undying epics of Homer or the forgotten world-wide conquests of Alexander. Of all the mighty monarchs of imperial Rome it is Justinian the law-maker who lives among the nations of the earth today. The only lasting monument of Napoleon's power and splendour may well prove to be the law code he gave to France. And so in our own race, no matter what cynics may say, the men to whom we owe most are those who raise and maintain the standards of the law. To be permitted therefore to play even a small part in its administration, either as judge or magistrate, is a privilege and a responsibility, in the fulfilment and discharge of which one must always remember that the Courts do not merely exist to punish and condemn but also to lend where possible a helping hand.

CHAPTER X

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Fortune changes like the sky;
Spirits drop and hopes soar high.
Life is full of ups and downs;
Failures, triumphs, smiles and frowns.
Keep your mental vision clear,
And the blue skies will appear.

THIS, then, is my case, the story of my life so far as it has gone, omitting those purely personal and domestic details which are of no interest to anyone except the few individuals directly concerned.

Looking back, I suppose it has been a life somewhat lacking in adventure and drama—doubtless because I myself am not of a particularly adventurous type—but nevertheless not without a certain variety of experience and interest.

In some things I have perhaps achieved a small measure of success, but on the other hand many of the ambitions and hopes of my younger days have remained unfulfilled.

However, this is a common experience, except in the case of that small minority who succeed in scaling the highest peaks. And even when they get there, some of them appear far from satisfied with what they have achieved; it was not quite what they wanted, or they have the feeling that their success was bought at too heavy a price—in health, or domestic or personal sacrifices.

At all events it is clear that, although a man may have gained riches, fame and honour, triumphed over his competitors and won the admiration of his associates, yet if at the same time he is tormented, as many men have been, by undisclosed ambitions, disillusioned in his friends, unappreciated in his domestic circle, or ill at ease mentally or physically, then to himself his life has been a failure, no matter what other people may think.

The only truly successful man is he whose life has been a happy one, and the only success worth having is that which springs from an untroubled spirit and a contented mind. If he is serene and satisfied in his inward self it is of little consequence whether others regard him as successful or not. The world has often envied a man whose life to himself has been a failure, empty and meaningless, whilst it has not given a passing thought to another who, if the truth were known, has looked into the face of Heaven. We all live in mansions of our own designing, into which few are admitted except the architect himself.

In my own case I realize how much on the whole I have to be thankful for, and how extremely fortunate I have been. Although I have had my share of anxiety and disappointment, I have had so much more than my share, compared with many others, of good health, security and success, and have so far been spared any overwhelming poignant tragedies and disasters such as have afflicted some of my friends and acquaintances.

All the same, I have always been blessed or cursed—I am not sure which—with a good deal of ambition. Of course in the make-up of every man there should be a certain element of ambition, for without it no one can make the best of himself or use his talents to the full; he will simply get into a groove, and life is bound to lose its flavour.

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Or, put more prosaically, just as a certain amount of fleas are said to be good for a dog, to prevent him from brooding on being a dog, so a certain amount of ambition may prevent a man from being too easily satisfied with himself. It gives him the urge to improve; it provides him with a stimulus and an incentive. In the words of Robert Louis Stevenson: "It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive"; ambition is synonymous with hope; and unless one works and hopes for the best it is impossible to succeed.

But, on the other hand, nothing has caused many men greater mental strain and anxiety and secret unhappiness than unfulfilled ambitions. I have often envied therefore those calmly philosophic souls who are free from such aspirations, and quite content to take life as it comes.

Almost every man realizes, sooner or later, that some of the things at which he aimed, positions to which he aspired, ambitions he entertained, are not for

him after all. It is one of the most difficult things in life to "climb down" without giving up. If a man cannot do what he wanted to do, then he must try to do what he can with a good heart. If he cannot be what he once thought he might be and even ought to be, he must try to be what he is in the finest manner he knows how. There are many doorways to the kingdom of a contented mind; if one is shut in your face it is wise not to make the mistake of refusing to enter by another which may be open. Of course ambition can take many forms. With some it is an ignoble desire for money and material possessions, with others—I should say by far the majority—the desire for fame and power; for, in the words of Tacitus: "the desire for glory clings to the best men longer than any other passion". This I believe is true; not that money is unimportant, far from it, but of all forms of ambition the mere desire to accumulate riches for their own sake or on account of the personal luxuries and amenities they bring seems to me the most futile. The main value of money, apart from what is needed for the ordinary necessities of life, is to my mind to be found in the freedom and independence of action which it alone can secure. To anyone with political ambitions or who desires to make headway in public life, reasonable economic security is almost indispensable, and I would certainly advise any young would-be politician not to think of taking up politics as a career or of entering Parliament until he is fortunate enough to possess this financial background, for if he does he may find that it is an uphill and possibly heartbreaking job.

Looking back on my life, I realize that what I have lacked most has been the power of intensive concentration on any one objective. I have always tended to have too many irons in the fire. I have suffered from a diversity of interests and have never been able to make up my mind which I cared about most. Apart from the law, upon which I have been mainly dependent for a livelihood, I had, at one time, strong leanings towards the stage, whilst politics, miscellaneous business activities, journalism and literature have all possessed for me at different periods of my life a powerful attraction. The result has been that I have never made the success of any of them which I possibly might have done if I had concentrated exclusively on some one of these variegated pursuits. Doubtless too this is the main reason why I have never succeeded in making money beyond, of course, the necessities of bread and butter and occasionally a little jam. Yet it has not altogether been for want of trying, but every time I seemed on the verge of "making a bit", to use a colloquialism, something has gone wrong, and on balance I have almost always been the loser over the transaction and have ended up worse off than I began. Once or twice in my life I have seemed on the way to financial success, and then just when I was about to turn the corner circumstances beyond my control have intervened to bar further progress and the whole enterprise has collapsed.

The question whether we would like to have our lives over again is one which most people have put to themselves some time or other, and which each must answer in his own way. It largely depends, of course, on what exactly is meant. Is it whether we would desire to live again through exactly the same experiences we have already had, or whether we would wish for a second chance with all the knowledge and experience we have already gained and the opportunity thereby of altering our course and perhaps of avoiding the mistakes we made the first time?

Some years ago Mr. Winston Churchill in one of his books discussed the matter in his usual entertaining style, and not even the fact that beyond that of any living man his own life has been one of interest, variety, colour, drama and success had prevented him apparently from coming to the conclusion at that time that he would not desire a repetition of the experience. Here is what he says:

Happy, vivid and full of interest as it has been, I do not wish to tread again the toilsome and dangerous path. Not even the opportunity of encountering a different series of adventures and successes would lure me. How could I be certain that the good fortune which has up to the present attended me with fair constancy would not be lacking at some critical moment in another chain of causation?

It must be remembered, however, that when these words were written Mr. Churchill was experiencing a period of frustration. At that time most people, probably including himself, would have said that his public career was more or less finished; and yet, as we know now, his supreme opportunity and the final justification of his whole life and career had not even begun. Possibly therefore he might give a different reply if the question were put to him today.

Lord Haldane was another great man who, when asked if he would like to have his life over again, gave a decided negative for much the same reason, namely that we all tend to underrate the part played by accident or luck in the shaping of our careers, and in giving us such success as we have had. We can never be sure that the same good fortune would attend us again.

This opens up a fascinating field of speculation as to how far the success of any man is due to his own conscious efforts and how far to circumstances beyond his control. Looking back, we can all recall chances we missed through ignorance or shortsightedness, friendly advice we neglected to take, unwise decisions we made, from which a little more experience and judgment might have saved us. How often have we taken some trifling decision or performed some insignificant action which has had unexpected and far-reaching results. We caught a train—or missed it; we attended some social function or we did not; by pure chance we ran into someone in the street, and later on we realized that it was just that trivial incident which changed the whole course of our lives.

We are all conscious too of neglected opportunities which have never recurred, and of how much we have missed through not taking advantage of them at the time.

As a young man I had the chance of paying a prolonged visit to Australia. For reasons which seemed excellent to me just then, I let the opportunity slip, and have regretted it ever since. If I had gone I have not much doubt it might have altered my whole life, and in any event would have been an invaluable experience. I should have gained first-hand knowledge of some of the more distant parts of the Empire, and really seen something of the world. It is in the highest degree unlikely that I shall ever have the chance to do so now, and even if I did it is too late to be of any use so far as my public career is concerned. At the time, however, I had the idea that it would unduly delay my call to the Bar and the day when I was hoping to be more or less self-supporting. That there was also a lady in the case from whom the prospect of a prolonged separation seemed intolerable no doubt had something to do with it. Yet I realize now that the opportunity was one which I ought to have seized with both hands. Having been brought up in a rather sheltered way and never having been to a public school, I was a bit soft and disinclined to stand on

my own feet. This voyage would have given me just what I badly needed; it would have taught me self-reliance, broadened my mind, and helped me, as an immature and callow youth with little knowledge of the world and its problems, to learn something of life and humanity in a wide sense. In addition, I should no doubt have had a wonderful time and accumulated a whole host of delightful memories. Yet I was foolish enough to let all this slip, and have never since had either the time or the money to travel so far afield.

But apart from such instances of lost opportunities, it is sometimes interesting to glance back and reflect on a few of the things we might try to shape differently if given the chance. For instance, I feel fairly sure I should not choose the legal profession if I had my time over again. Not that I have any reason to suppose I should have done better at anything else. All I mean is that if left to follow my own inclinations they would probably have led me elsewhere. There is the stage, for instance, and yet I realize that its attractiveness as a profession has seriously declined since the days of my youth, the era of the actor-manager, when the creation and maintenance of an artistic tradition was regarded as more important than mere box-office success. In those days, too, the stage managed to invest itself with a romance, an element of aloofness and mystery it does not now possess when every detail of an actor's private and domestic life is avidly seized upon by Press and public alike.

All the same, I have never lost my love for the theatre and everything connected with it, and I probably possessed a greater "flair" for acting than for anything else.

Then again, if I had a second chance, I should devote more time to writing. Whether I have any talent in that direction and could ever hope to achieve even a small measure of success with my pen I do not know. Possibly readers of this book may take a somewhat gloomy view of such aspirations! But I can truly say that the small amount of literary work I have undertaken has afforded me considerable interest and satisfaction. The technique of writing is in itself a fascinating study, and the mere effort of setting down one's thoughts on paper gratifies an instinct for self-expression and clarifies the mind, as well as providing a permanent and lasting record of one's personality and ideas.

Not only that, but writing even as a hobby helps to keep one intellectually alive. There is nothing worse than to allow ourselves—no matter what may happen to our physical bodies—to get mentally slack. Furthermore, there is no one who does not derive a peculiar satisfaction from seeing his ideas in print, and few thrills in life equal that experienced by an author on receiving from a publisher the first copies of a new book.

It is only in recent years that I have felt any overwhelming urge to write. This is possibly because I had not previously the leisure and therefore the inclination to try to do so. It may be that in later life I have suffered, as many men do, from a feeling of frustration, and as a result have experienced a greater desire for self-expression. I will not deny that since I gave up active political life I have felt myself to be more or less on the shelf. In a safe position it is true, and for that I do not want to appear ungrateful, but all the same with not much more to hope for except that I may be fortunate enough to keep my health and mental powers and be able to do my work with reasonable efficiency until the time comes for me to retire and admit to myself as well as to the world that I am really an old man. But I am certainly not

prepared to do that just yet in spite of the appalling fact that shortly I shall be what is called a sexagenarian. It is difficult to believe, and yet the disturbing fact remains that five-sixths of my life have slipped by without having very much to show for it. It is a depressing thought, especially if one happens to wake up about four in the morning, when doctors tell us our vitality is at its lowest, and give way to introspection. It is not easy at such an hour to be as philosophic as every sensible person should try to be about so inevitable and universal an experience as growing old. Yet what we have to remember is that we are all of us as old and no older than we feel, and that it is best not to pay too much attention to birthdays.

Then again one should never forget that the average span of life has been increased by ten to twenty years during the past century and old age has been postponed proportionately. The progress of science continues to make our days longer and healthier; the man of sixty today is probably younger in every way than the man of forty-five to fifty in the nineteenth century; and while youth will have its day there are more and more men and women no longer young in years who refuse to be brushed on one side, and who still have a valuable contribution to make to human progress, knowledge and experience.

Some time ago I sat next at dinner to the late Sir James Crichton-Browne, the most amazing man of his age I ever met. With his "Dundreary" whiskers and somewhat old-fashioned dress-clothes, he looked what of course he was, a typical Victorian. Yet he had never lost the art of moving with the times. Although well into the nineties when I met him, he was still able to enjoy a good dinner and a glass or two of wine, in regard to which, by the way, he was a real, and not as so often happens nowadays a pretended, connoisseur, and then after it all to make an admirable impromptu speech, full of topical allusions and sparkling with wit and good-fellowship. When this happens old age is a fine achievement. Of course nothing is more tragic than when one is overtaken by chronic ill-health and faced with a gradual but none the less obvious deterioration of one's mental and physical faculties. On the other hand, I have met many old people who without this excuse allowed themselves to become a mere burden both to themselves and others. Generally it is our children who make us realize our years as we watch them growing up with a rapidity that is altogether alarming. On the other hand, they do more than anything else to keep us young, and for that we owe them much. By them we are kept in touch with modern ideas and outlook, and are constantly rejuvenated by contact with their vitality and freshness.

It is some years now since my daughter, Sylvia, was married, and since then I have become a grandfather twice over. Whilst there is a natural satisfaction in watching one's children grow up in health and strength, able to shape their own lives and destiny, yet for oneself it marks the irrevocable passage of time in a way that permits of no argument.

Nevertheless, growing old is a queer business, because it comes on us so gradually that we feel no difference. One may notice a disinclination to do certain things one used to do, run after buses and so forth; we may detect a tendency in ourselves to tire more easily after some physical or mental effort, certain things do not give us quite the same thrill as they used to do, and we are perhaps less easily amused; our emotions do not lie quite so near the surface. Otherwise time does not seem to have changed us much inwardly. Externally, as we ruefully realize when we look in the glass or happen to come

across some old photographs, it is a different matter. Nevertheless whilst we all have to accept old age, the great thing is not to give way to it. Within reason, one should never regard oneself as too old for anything, certainly not for any form of intellectual activity, even if physically one may have to beat a graceful retreat. But mental alertness is not necessarily affected by advancing years, although it may be in some individual cases. Even in such cases, however, it is often because the individuals concerned have permitted themselves to stagnate; in other words, age is very largely a matter of mental outlook and it is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules. Only in one respect, as we grow older, do we inevitably feel, I think, a sense of handicap, namely that for what we are doing or still hope to do there is in the ordinary course of nature so little time left.

From this point of view it is not difficult to feel envious of those who still have their chance and maybe are accomplishing big things, while still possessing a credit balance of years which in our own case has long since disappeared. We may feel that if we had had their opportunities at their age or if circumstances had treated us more kindly we might have done better, or at least equally well, but who knows? At all events it is useless to repine, and no matter what setbacks or disappointments we have encountered a little reflection is usually enough to satisfy us that it might have been worse. Even advancing age has its compensations: knowledge, experience, judgment such as youth cannot possess are priceless assets, and so far as the power of enjoyment is concerned, I believe there never was a time when, under normal conditions, older people got more of a "kick" out of life or were less conscious of their years.

We are often told that this is an age of youth. Of course it is, but was there ever a period of which that could not be said? Youth always has the advantage because to it belongs the future, and just now it has the specially good fortune that after the war it can probably look forward to what we in our generation have never experienced, a prolonged era of peace.

As the years pass the only wise thing is to try to cultivate a certain fatalism and philosophy and, so far as possible, let each day take care of itself. One should not make too many plans for the future, for one never knows what may happen, and things seldom work out just as one had expected. "Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday; why fret about them if today be sweet?" To enjoy and appreciate the existing hour is to have grasped the true secret of happiness. Today we should count our blessings and not be too apprehensive of the morrow. A year hence perhaps, when stricken down by an unforeseen calamity, we may look back on these present days as some of the best of our lives, and lament our wilful blindness at not having enjoyed them to the full. Happiness is so thinly spread on the bread of existence that we should accept with a grateful heart such advantages as we possess for fear that worse may befall us.

I cannot call myself a religious man in the narrow and conventional meaning of the term, but all the same I have a very strong feeling as to the need of every individual for some kind of religious belief. Personally I have never attached much importance to creeds and dogmas, and I regret to say my church-going has been infrequent and intermittent. I have, moreover, always found it difficult to discuss religious and spiritual problems in their personal application without a certain feeling of embarrassment. For one thing it seems to me that

such discussions lead nowhere. Belief in a future existence, and that to my mind is the crux of the whole thing, is a matter of blind faith which no amount of controversy or argument can alter. Belief in God may not be essential to belief in immortality, but it is difficult to separate the one from the other. If death ends all, then we naturally ask ourselves what is the purpose and meaning of life. And to that riddle every individual must provide his own answer, without any assurance that the answer is the right one. Is this life an end in itself, and if so could anything be more futile, or is it merely a stepping-stone to something else, and if so what? *Prima facie* the arguments for immortality seem simple enough. The first is based on the incompleteness of life. The craving to fulfil ourselves in a future existence in a way we have been prevented from doing on this earth, through force of circumstances or our own limitations, is very strong. I am sure that with a great many people it is this desire which causes them to cling so strongly to the idea of personal survival, the only kind of survival which has any attraction for the average man. Yet what logical reason is there for believing in it? If the question is bluntly put, we can only answer there is none. Logic, science, metaphysics have no contribution to make, for it is in faith and faith alone that we must find our answer, if answer there be, and faith in God is a personal experience in itself incapable of proof.

No doubt the inequality and injustice that reign in this world lead many people to feel that through no fault of their own they have not had a fair chance to develop the best that is in them. They cling therefore to the hope that in another existence the opportunity will be granted them to do better under more favourable conditions. Then again, may we not argue that since so much trouble has been taken to bring us into the world as individuals, it is incredible that when we leave it our individuality is at an end, and that our only fate is to be blotted out altogether or to be merged into some collective consciousness of the spirit? Survival of that kind would not appeal to most of us, or indeed seem to fulfil Christ's teaching as to individual immortality.

This question can be put in yet another way. Will man remember? If we could conceive a man to have irretrievably lost his memory, then he would have lost his immortality as an individual. What therefore most of us have in mind when we talk of survival after death is that, in some form or other, we should retain those qualities which individualize us: such as our memory, experience and general characteristics. Speaking for myself, I believe in a future life for the simple reason that otherwise this one would not make sense. But I would add this, that whatever one believes about another world, there is only one course open to us, and that is to conduct ourselves in this world as if we were immortal. In no other way can we live a decent life from the point of view of our common humanity and avoid becoming callous and indifferent to the struggles and suffering of our fellow human beings.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" I believe the answer is that to a large extent we are, and that each of us must recognize a personal responsibility in our relationships with one another, for which we shall ultimately be called to account.

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